The Chalice Of Courage

Cyrus Townsend Brady

"Leave me to myself, I would not take the finest, noblest man on earth—" (*page* 50)

THE CHALICE OF COURAGE

A Romance of Colorado

BY

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THE SOUTHERNERS,
THE GRIP OF HONOR,
A MIDSHIPMAN IN THE PACIFIC, ETC.

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
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GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS :: NEW YORK

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Published, February, 1912

To My Beloved Friend
JOHN B. WALKER, JR.
Great-hearted, Great-souled, High-spirited
Man of Colorado.

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PREFACE

PREFACES, like much study, are a weariness to the flesh; to some people, not to me. I can conceive of no literary proposition more attractive than the opportunity to write unlimited prefaces. Let me write the preface and I care not who writes the book. Unfortunately for my desires, I can only be prefatory in the case of my own. Happily my own are sufficiently numerous to afford me some scope in the indulgence of this passion for forewords.

I suppose no one ever sat down to write a preface until after he had written the book. It is like the final pat that the fond parent gives to the child before it is allowed to depart in its best clothes. I have seen the said parent accompany the child quite a distance on the way, keeping up a continual process of adjustment of raiment which it was evidently loath to discontinue.

And that is my case exactly. Here is the novel with which I have done my best, which I have written and rewritten after long and earnest thought, and yet I cannot let it go forth without some final, shall I say caress? And as it is, I really have nothing of importance to say! The

final pats and pulls and tugs and smoothings do not materially add to the child's appearance or increase its fascination, and I am at a loss to find a reason for the preface except it be the converse of the statement about the famous and much disliked Dr. Fell!

Perhaps, if I admit to you that I have been in the cañon, that I have followed the course of the brook, that I have seen that lake, that I have tramped those trails, it will serve to make you understand, dear reader, how real and actual it all is to me. Yes, I have even looked over the precipice down which the woman fell. I have talked with old Kirkby; Robert Maitland is an intimate friend of mine; I have even met his brother in Philadelphia and as for that glorious girl Enid — well, being a married man, I will refrain from any personal appraisement of her qualities. But I can with propriety dilate upon Newbold, and even Armstrong, bad as he was, has some place in my regard.

If these people shall by any chance seem real to you and become your friends as they are mine, another of those pleasant ties that bind the author and his public together will have been woven, knotted, forged. Never mind the method so long as there is a tie. And with this hope, looking out up the winter snows that might have covered the

range, as I have often seen them there, I bid you a happy good morning.

CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY

St. George's Rectory, Kansas City, Missouri.
Thanksgiving Day, 1911.

CONTENTS

BOOK I

THE HIGHER LAW

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	The Cup That Would Not Pass	1
II	Alone Upon the Trail	16

BOOK II

THE EAST AND THE WEST

III	The Young Lady from Philadelphia	29
IV	The Game Played in the Usual Way	43
V	The Story and the Letters	55
VI	The Pool and the Water Sprite	72
VII	The Bear, the Man and the Flood	88
VIII	Death, Life and the Resurrection	101

BOOK III

FORGETTING AND FORGOT

IX	A Wild Dash for the Hills	123
X	A Telegram and a Caller	136
XI	Over the Hills and Far Away	149
XII	On the Two Sides of the Door	166
XIII	The Log Hut in the Mountains	179
XIV	A Tour of Inspection	193
XV	The Castaways of the Mountains	203

CONTENTS

BOOK IV

OH YE ICE AND SNOW, PRAISE YE THE LORD

CHAPTER		PAGE
XVI	The Woman's Heart	223
XVII	The Man's Heart	236
XVIII	The Kiss on the Hand	248
XIX	The Face in the Locket	261
XX	The Strength of the Weak	276

BOOK V

THE CUP IS DRAINED

XXI	The Challenge of the Range	291
XXII	The Converging Trails	310
XXIII	The Odds Against Him	327
XXIV	The Last Resort of Kings and Men	339
XXV	The Becoming End	357
XXVI	The Draught of Joy	368

ILLUSTRATIONS

"Leave Me to Myself, I would not take the Finest, Noblest Man on Earth—" . . . . *Frontispiece*

"Read the Letters," He Said. "They'll Tell the Story. Good-night." . . . . . *Facing page* 70

"Wait! I am a Woman, Absolutely alone, Entirely at Your Mercy" . . . . . " " 156

It Was All up with Armstrong " " 354

THE CHALICE OF COURAGE

(Courtesy of *The Outlook*)

Drink of the Chalice of Courage!
  Pressed to the trembling lip,
The dark-veiled fears
  From the passing years,
Like a dusty garment slip.

Drink of the Chalice of Courage!
  Poured for the Hero's feast,
When the strength divine
  Of its subtle wine
Is shared with the last and least.

Drink of the Chalice of Courage!
  The mead of mothers and men,
And the sinewed might
  Of the Victor's might,
Be yours, again and again.

MARIE HEMSTREET

BOOK I

THE HIGHER LAW

CHAPTER I

THE CUP THAT WOULD NOT PASS

THE huge concave of the rocky wall towering above them threw the woman's scream far into the vast profound of the cañon. It came sharp to the man's ear, yet terminated abruptly; as when two rapidly moving trains pass, the whistle of one is heard shrill for one moment only to be cut short on the instant. Brief as it was, however, the sound was sufficiently appalling; its suddenness, its unexpectedness, the awful terror in its single note, as well as its instantaneity, almost stopped his heart.

With the indifference of experience and long usage he had been riding carelessly along an old pre-historic trail through the cañon, probably made and forgotten long before the Spaniards spied out the land. Engrossed in his thoughts, he had been heedless alike of the wall above and of the wall below. Prior to that moment neither the over-hanging rock that curved above his head nor the almost sheer fall to the river a thousand feet beneath the narrow ledge of the trail had influenced him at all. He might have

been riding a country road so indifferent had been his progress. That momentary shriek dying thinly away into a strange silence changed everything.

The man was riding a sure-footed mule, which perhaps somewhat accounted for his lack of care, and it seemed as if the animal must also have heard and understood the meaning of the woman's scream, for with no bridle signal and no spoken word the mule stopped suddenly as if petrified. Rider and ridden stood as if carved from stone.

The man's comprehending, realizing fear almost paralyzed him. At first he could scarcely force himself to do that toward which his whole being tended — look around. Divining instantly the full meaning of that sudden cry, it seemed hours before he could turn his head; really her cry and his movement were practically simultaneous. He threw an agonized glance backward on the narrow trail and saw — nothing! Where there had been life, companionship, comradeship, a woman, there was now vacancy.

The trail made a little bend behind him, he could see its surface for some distance, but not what lay beneath. He did not need the testimony of his eyes for that. He knew what was down there.

It seemed to his distorted perceptions that he moved slowly, his limbs were like lead, every joint was as stiff as a rusty hinge. Actually he dropped from the mule's back with reckless and life-defying haste and fairly leaped backward on his path. Had there been any to note his progress, they would have said he risked his own life over every foot of the way. He ran down the narrow shelf, rock strewn and rough, swaying upon the unfathomable brink until he reached the place where she had been a moment since. There he dropped on one knee and looked downward.

She was there! A few hundred feet below the trail edge the cañon wall, generally a sheer precipice, broadened out into a great butte, or buttress, which sloped somewhat more gently to the foaming, roaring river far beneath. About a hundred and fifty feet under him a stubby spur with a pocket on it jutted out from the face of the cliff; she had evidently struck on that spur and bounded off and fallen, half rolling, to the broad top of the butte two hundred or more feet below the pocket.

Three hundred and fifty feet down to where she lay he could distinguish little except a motionless huddled mass. The bright blue of her dress made a splotch of unwonted color against

the reddish brown monotones of the mountain side and cañon wall. She was dead, of course; she must be dead, the man felt. From that distance he could see no breathing, if such there were; indeed as he stared she grew less and less distinct to him, his eyes did not fill with tears, but to his vision the very earth itself, the vast depths of the cañon, the towering wall on the other side, seemed to quiver and heave before him. For the first time in his life the elevation made him dizzy, sick. He put his hands to his face to shut out the sight, he tore them away to look again. He lifted his eyes toward the other side across the great gulf to the opposing wall which matched the one upon which he stood, where the blue sky cloudless overhung.

"God!" he whispered in futile petition or mayhap expostulation.

He was as near the absolute breaking point as a man may go and yet not utterly give way, for he loved this woman as he loved that light of heaven above him, and in the twinkling of an eye she was no more. And so he stared and stared dumbly agonizing, wondering, helpless, misty-eyed, blind.

He sank back from the brink at last and tried to collect his thoughts. What was he to do? There was but one answer to that question. He

must go down to her. There was one quick and easy way; over the brink, the way she had gone. That thought came to him for a moment, but he put it away. He was not a coward, life was not his own to give or to take, besides she might be alive, she might need him. There must be some other way.

Determining upon action, his resolution rose dominant, his vision cleared. Once again he forced himself to look over the edge and see other things than she. He was a daring, skillful and experienced mountaineer; in a way mountaineering was his trade. He searched the side of the cañon to the right and the left with eager scrutiny and found no way within the compass of his vision to the depths below. He shut his eyes and concentrated his thoughts to remember what they had passed over that morning. There came to him the recollection of a place which as he had viewed it he had idly thought might afford a practicable descent to the river's rim.

Forgetful of the patient animal beside him, he rose to his feet and with one last look at the poor object below started on his wild plunge down the trail over which some men might scarcely have crept on hands and knees. Sweat bedewed his forehead, his limbs trembled, his pulses throbbed, his heart beat almost to burst-

ing. Remorse sharpened by love, passion quickened by despair, scourged him, desperate, on the way. And God protected him also, or he had fallen at every uncertain, hurried, headlong step.

And as he ran, thoughts, reproaches, scourged him on. Why had he brought her, why had he allowed her to take that trail which but for him and for her had probably not been traversed by man or woman or beast, save the mountain sheep, the gray wolves, or the grizzly bear, for five hundred years. She had protested that she was as good a mountaineer as he — and it was true — and she had insisted on accompanying him; he recollected that there had been a sort of terror in her urgency,— he must take her, he must not leave her alone, she had pleaded; he had objected, but he had yielded, the joy of her companionship had meant so much to him in his lonely journeying, and now — he accused himself bitterly as he surged onward.

After a time the man forced himself to observe the road, he discovered that in an incredibly short period, perhaps an hour, he had traversed what it had taken them four times as long to pass over that very day. He must be near his goal. Ah, there it was at last, and in all the turmoil and torture of his brain he found

room for a throb of satisfaction when he came upon the broken declivity. Yes, it did afford a practicable descent; some landslide centuries back had made there a sort of rude, rough, broken, megalithic stairway in the wall of the cañon. The man threw himself upon it and with bleeding hands, bruised limbs and torn clothing descended to the level of the river.

Two atoms to the eye of the Divine, in that vast rift in the gigantic mountains. One unconscious, motionless, save for faint gasping breaths; the other toiling blindly along the river bank, fortunately here affording practicable going, to the foot of the great butte upon whose huge shoulder the other lay. The living and the dead in the waste and the wilderness of the everlasting hills.

Unconsciously but unerringly the man had fixed the landmarks in his mind before he started on that terrific journey. Without a moment of incertitude, or hesitation, he proceeded directly to the base of the butte and as rapidly as if he had been fresh for the journey and the endeavor. Up he climbed without a pause for rest. It was a desperate going, almost sheer at times, but his passion found the way. He clawed and tore at the rocks like an animal, he performed feats of strength and skill and determination and reck-

less courage marvelous and impossible under less exacting demands. Somehow or other he got to the top at last; perhaps no man in all the ages since the world's first morning when God Himself upheaved the range had so achieved that goal.

The last ascent was up a little stretch of straight rock over which he had to draw himself by main strength and determination. He fell panting on the brink, but not for a moment did he remain prone; he got to his feet at once and staggered across the plateau which made the head of the butte toward the blue object on the further side beneath the wall of the cliff above, and in a moment he bent over what had been — nay, as he saw the slow choking uprise of her breast, what was — his wife.

He knelt down beside her and looked at her for a moment, scarce daring to touch her. Then he lifted his head and flung a glance around the cañon as if seeking help from man. As he did so he became aware, below him on the slope, of the dead body of the poor animal she had been riding, whose misstep, from whatever cause he would never know, had brought this catastrophe upon them.

Nothing else met his gaze but the rocks, brown, gray, relieved here and there by green

clumps of stunted pine. Nothing met his ear except far beneath him the roar of the river, now reduced almost to a murmur, with which the shivering leaves of aspens, rustled by the gentle breeze of this glorious morning, blended softly like a sigh of summer. No, there was nobody in the cañon, no help there. He threw his head back and stretched out his arms toward the blue depths of the heavens above, to the tops of the soaring peaks, and there was nothing there but the eternal silence of a primeval day.

"God! God!" he murmured again in his despair.

It was the final word that comes to human lips in the last extremity when life and its hopes and its possibilities tremble on the verge. And no answer came to this poor man out of that vast void.

He bent to the woman again. What he saw can hardly be described. Her right arm and her left leg were bent backward and under her. They were shattered, evidently. He was afraid to examine her and yet he knew that practically every other bone in her body was broken as well. Her head fell lower than her shoulders, the angle which she made with the uneven rock on which she lay convinced him that her back was broken too. Her clothing was rent by her contact with

the rocky spur above, it was torn from the neck downward, exposing a great red scar which ran across her sweet white young breast, blood oozing from it, while in the middle of it something yellow and bright gleamed in the light. Her cheek was cut open, her glorious hair, matted, torn and bloody, was flung backward from her downthrown head.

She should have been dead a thousand times, but she yet lived, she breathed, her ensanguined bosom rose and fell. Through her pallid lips bloody foam bubbled, she was still alive.

The man must do something. He did not dare to move her body, yet he took off his hat, folded it, lifted her head tenderly and slipped it underneath; it made a better pillow than the hard rock, he thought. Then he tore his handkerchief from his neck and wiped away the foam from her lips. In his pocket he had a flask of whiskey, a canteen of water that hung from his shoulder somehow had survived the rough usage of the rocks. He mingled some of the water with a portion of the spirit in the cup of the flask and poured a little down her throat. Tenderly he took his handkerchief again, and wetting it laved her brow. Except to mutter incoherent prayers again and again he said no word, but his heart was filled with passionate endearments, he

lavished agonized and infinite tenderness upon her in his soul.

By and by she opened her eyes. In those eyes first of all he saw bewilderment, and then terror and then anguish so great that it cannot be described, pain so horrible that it is not good for man even to think upon it. Incredible as it may seem, her head moved, her lips relaxed, her set jaw unclenched, her tongue spoke thickly.

"God!" she said.

The same word that he had used, that final word that comes to the lips when the heart is wrung, or the body is racked beyond human endurance. The universal testimony to the existence of the Divine, that trouble and sometimes trouble alone, wrings from man. No human name, not even his, upon her lips in that first instant of realization!

"How I — suffer," she faltered weakly.

Her eyes closed again, the poor woman had told her God of her condition, that was all she was equal to. Man and human relationships might come later. The man knelt by her side, his hands upraised.

"Louise," he whispered, "speak to me."

Her eyes opened again.

"Will," the anguished voice faltered on, "I am — broken — to pieces — kill me. I can't

stand — kill me "— her voice rose with a sudden fearful appeal — " kill me."

Then the eyes closed and this time they did not open, although now he overwhelmed her with words, alas, all he had to give her. At last his passion, his remorse, his love, gushing from him in a torrent of frantic appeal awakened her again. She looked him once more in the face and once more begged him for that quick relief he alone could give.

" Kill me."

That was her only plea. There has been One and only One, who could sustain such crucifying anguish as she bore without such appeal being wrested from the lips, yet even He, upon His cross, for one moment, thought God had forsaken and forgotten Him!

She was silent, but she was not dead. She was speechless, but she was not unconscious, for she opened her eyes and looked at him with such pitiful appeal that he would fain hide his face as he could not bear it, and yet again and again as he stared down into her eyes he caught that heart breaking entreaty, although now she made no sound. Every twisted bone, every welling vein, every scarred and marred part on once smooth soft flesh was eloquent of that piteous petition for relief. " Kill me " she seemed to say in

her voiceless agony. Agony the more appalling because at last it could make no sound.

He could not resist that appeal. He fought against it, but the demand came to him with more and more terrific force until he could no longer oppose it. That cup was tendered to him and he must drain it. No more from his lips than from the lips of Him of the Garden could it be withdrawn. Out of that chalice he must drink. It could not pass. Slowly, never taking his eyes from her, as a man might who was fascinated or hypnotized, he lifted his hand to his holster and drew out his revolver.

No, he could not do it. He laid the weapon down on the rock again and bowed forward on his knees, praying incoherently, protesting that God should place this burden on mere man. In the silence he could hear the awful rasp of her breath — the only answer. He looked up to find her eyes upon him again.

Life is a precious thing, to preserve it men go to the last limit. In defense of it things are permitted that are permitted in no other case. Is it ever nobler to destroy it than to conserve it? Was this such an instance? What were the conditions?

There was not a human being, white or red, within five days' journey from the spot where

these two children of malign destiny confronted each other. That poor huddled broken mass of flesh and bones could not have been carried a foot across that rocky slope without suffering agonies beside which all the torture that might be racking her now would be as nothing. He did not dare even to lay hand upon her to straighten even one bent and twisted limb, he could not even level or compose her body where she lay. He almost felt that he had been guilty of unpardonable cruelty in giving her the stimulant and recalling her to consciousness. Nor could he leave her where she was, to seek and bring help to her. With all the speed that frantic desire, and passionate adoration, and divine pity, would lend to him, it would be a week before he could return, and by that time the wolves and the vultures — he could not think that sentence to completion. That way madness lay.

The woman was doomed, no mortal could survive her wounds, but she might linger for days while high fever and inflammation supervened. And each hour would add to her suffering. God was merciful to His Son, Christ died quickly on the cross, mere man sometimes hung there for days.

All these things ran like lightning through his brain. His hand closed upon the pistol, the

eternal anodyne. No, he could not. And the tortured eyes were open again, it seemed as if the woman had summoned strength for a final appeal.

"Will," she whispered, "if you — love me — kill me."

He thrust the muzzle of his weapon against her heart, she could see his movement and for a moment gratitude and love shone in her eyes, and then with a hand that did not tremble, he pulled the trigger.

A thousand thunder claps could not have roared in his ear with such detonation. And he had done it! He had slain the thing he loved! Was it in obedience to a higher law even than that writ on the ancient tables of stone?

For a moment he thought incoherently, the pistol fell from his hand, his eyes turned to her face, her eyes were open still, but there was neither pain, nor appeal, nor love, nor relief in them; there was no light in them; only peace, calm, darkness, rest. His hand went out to them and drew the lids down, and as he did so, something gave way in him and he fell forward across the red, scarred white breast that no longer either rose or fell.

CHAPTER II

ALONE UPON THE TRAIL

THEY had started from their last camp early in the morning. It had been mid-day when she fell and long after noon when he killed her and lapsed into merciful oblivion. It was dusk in the cañon when he came to life again. The sun was still some distance above the horizon, but the jutting walls of the great pass cut off the light, the butte top was in ever deepening shadow.

I have often wondered what were the feelings of Lazarus when he was called back to life by the great cry of his Lord. "Hither — Out!" Could that transition from the newer way of death to the older habit of living have been accomplished without exquisite anguish and pain, brief, sudden, but too sacred, like his other experiences, to dwell upon in mortal hours?

What he of Bethany might perhaps have experienced this man felt long after under other circumstances. The enormous exertions of the day, the cruel bruises and lacerations to which clothes and body gave evidence, the sick, giddy, uncertain, helpless, feeling that comes when one recovers

consciousness after such a collapse, would have been hard enough to bear; but he took absolutely no account of any of these things for, as he lifted himself on his hands, almost animal-like for a moment, from the cold body of his wife, everything came across him with a sudden, terrific, overwhelming, rush of recollection.

She was dead, and he had killed her. There were reasons, arguments, excuses, for his course; he forgot them confronted by that grim, terrific, tragic fact. The difference between that mysterious thing so incapable of human definition which we call life, and that other mysterious thing equally insusceptible of explanation which we call death, is so great that when the two confront each other the most indifferent is awed by the contrast. Many a man and many a woman prays by the bedside of some agonized sufferer for a surcease of anguish only to be brought about by death, by a dissolution of soul and body, beseeching God of His mercy for the oblivion of the last, long, quiet, sleep; but when the prayer has been granted, and the living eyes look into the dead, the beating heart bends over the still one — it is a hard soul indeed which has the strength not to wish again for a moment, one little moment of life, to whisper one word of abiding love, to hear one word of fond farewell.

Since that is true, what could this man think whose hand had pointed the weapon and pulled the trigger and caused that great gaping hole through what had once been a warm and loving heart? God had laid upon him a task, than which none had ever been heavier on the shoulders of man, and he did not think as he stared at her wildly that God had given him at the same time strength to bear his burden.

Later, it might be that cold reason would come to his aid and justify him for what he had done, but now, now, he only realized that she was dead, and he had killed her. He forgot her suffering in his own anguish and reproach of himself. He found time to marvel at himself with a strange sort of wonder. How could he have done it.

Something broke the current of his thoughts, and it was good for him that it was so. He heard a swish through the air and he looked away from his dead wife in the direction of the sound. A little distance off upon a pinnacle of rock he saw a vulture, a hideous, horrible, unclean, carrion bird. While he watched, another and another settled softly down. He rose to his feet and far beneath him from the tree clad banks of the river the long howl of a wolf smote upon his ear. Gluttony and rapine were at

hand. Further down the declivity the body of the dead mule was the object of the converging attack from earth and air. The threat of that attack stirred him to life.

There were things he had to do. The butte top was devoid of earth or much vegetation, yet here and there in hollows where water settled or drained, soft green moss grew. He stooped over and lifted the body of the woman. She seemed to fall together loosely and almost break within his hands — it was evidence of what the fall had done for her, justification for his action, too, if he had been in a mood to reason about it, but his only thought then was of how she must have suffered. By a strange perversion he had to fight against the feeling that she was suffering now. He laid her gently and tenderly down in a deep hollow in the rock shaped almost to contain her. He straightened her poor twisted limbs. He arranged with decent care the ragged dress, covering over the torn breast and the frightful wound above her heart. With the last of the water in the canteen, he washed her face, he could not wash out the scar of course. With rude unskillful hands, yet with pitiable tenderness, he strove to arrange her blood-matted hair, he pillowed her head upon his hat again.

Sometimes the last impression of life is

stamped on the face of death, sometimes we see in the awful fixity of feature that attends upon dissolution, the index of the agony in which life has passed, but more often, thank God, death lays upon pain and sorrow a smoothing, calming hand. It was so in this instance. There was a great peace, a great relief, in the face he looked upon; this poor woman had been tortured not only in body, that he knew, but she had suffered anguish of soul of which he was unaware, and death, had it come in gentler form would perhaps not have been unwelcome. That showed in her face. There was dignity, composure, surcease of care, repose — the rest that shall be forever!

The man had done all that he could for her. Stop, there was one thing more; he knelt down by her side, he was not what we commonly call a religious man, the habit that he had learned at his mother's knee he had largely neglected in maturer years, but he had not altogether forgotten, and even the atheist — and he was far from that — might have prayed then.

"God, accept her," he murmured. "Christ receive her," — that was all but it was enough.

He remained by her side some time looking at her; he would fain have knelt there forever; he would have been happy at that moment if he could

have lain down by her and had someone do for them both the last kindly office he was trying to do for her. But that was not to be, and the growing darkness warned him to make haste. The wolf barks were sharper and nearer, he stooped over her, bent low and laid his face against hers. Oh that cold awful touch of long farewell. He tore himself away from her, lifted from her neck a little object that had gleamed so prettily amid the red blood. It was a locket. He had never seen it before and had no knowledge of what it might contain. He kissed it, slipped it into the pocket of his shirt and rose to his feet.

The plateau was strewn with rock; working rapidly and skillfully he built a burial mound of stone over her body. The depression in which she lay was deep enough to permit no rock to touch her person. The cairn, if such it may be called, was soon completed. No beast of the earth or bird of the air could disturb what was left of his wife. It seemed so piteous to him to think of her so young, and so sweet and so fair, so soft and so tender, so brave and so true, lying alone in the vast of the cañon, weighted down by the great rocks that love's hands had heaped above her. But there was no help for it.

Gathering up the revolver and canteen he

turned and fell rather than climbed to the level of the river. It was quite dark in the depths of the cañon, but he pressed rapidly on over the uneven and broken rocks until he reached the giant stairway. Up them he toiled painfully until he attained again the trail.

It was dark when he reached the wooded recess where they had slept the night before. There were grass and trees, a bubbling spring, an oasis amid the desert of rocks; he found the ashes of their fire and gathering wood heaped it upon the still living embers until the blaze rose and roared. He realized at last that he was weary beyond measure, he had gone through the unendurable since the morning. He threw himself down alone where they had lain together the night before and sought in vain for sleep. In his ears he heard that sharp, sudden, breaking cry once more, and her voice begging him to kill her. He heard again the rasp of her agonized breathing, the crashing detonation of the weapon. He writhed with the anguish of it all. Dry-eyed he arose at last and stretched out his hands to that heaven that had done so little for him he thought.

Long after midnight he fell into a sort of uneasy, restless stupor. The morning sun of the new and desolate day recalled him to action. He arose to his feet and started mechanically down

the trail alone — always and forever alone. Yet God was with him though he knew it not.

Four days later a little party of men winding through the foothills came upon a wavering, ghastly, terrifying figure. Into the mining town two days before had wandered a solitary mule, scraps of harness dangling from it. They had recognized it as one of a pair the man had purchased for a proposed journey far into the unsurveyed and inaccessible mountains — to hunt for the treasures hidden within their granite breasts. It told too plainly a story of disaster. A relief party had been hurriedly organized to search for the two, one of whom was much beloved in the rude frontier camp.

The man they met on the way was the man they had come to seek. His boots were cut to pieces, his feet were raw and bleeding for he had taken no care to order his going or to choose his way. His clothes were in rags, through rents and tatters his emaciated body showed its discolored bruises. His hands were swollen and soiled with wounds and the stains of the way. The front of his shirt was sadly and strangely discolored. He was hatless, his hair was gray, his face was as white as the snow on the crest of the peak, his lips were bloodless yet his eyes blazed with fever.

For four days without food and with but little water this man had plodded down the mountain toward the camp. All his energies were merged in one desire, to come in touch with humanity and tell his awful story; the keeping of it to himself, which he must do perforce because he was alone in the world, added to the difficulty of endurance. The sun had beaten down upon him piteously during the day. The cold dew had drenched him in the night. Apparitions had met his vision alike in the darkness and in the light. Voices had whispered to him as he plodded on. But something had sustained him in spite of the awful drain, physical and mental, which had wasted him away. Something had sustained him until he came in touch with men, thereafter the duty would devolve upon his brethren not upon himself.

They caught him as he staggered into the group of them, these Good Samaritans of the frontier; they undressed him and washed him, they bound up his wounds and ministered to him, they laid him gently down upon the ground, they bent over him tenderly and listened to him while he told in broken, disjointed words the awful story, of her plunge into the cañon, of his search for her, of her last appeal to him. And then he stopped.

"What then?" asked one of the men bending over him as he hesitated.

"God forgive me — I shot her — through the heart."

There was appalling stillness in the little group of rough men, while he told them where she lay and begged them to go and bring back what was left of her.

"You must bring her — back," he urged pitifully.

None of the men had ever been up the cañon, but they knew of its existence and the twin peaks of which he had told them could be seen from afar. He had given them sufficient information to identify the place and to enable them to go and bring back the body for Christian burial. Now these rude men of the mining camp had loved that woman as men love a bright and cheery personality which dwelt among them.

"Yes," answered the spokesman, "but what about you?"

"I shall be — a dead man," was the murmured answer, "and I don't care — I shall be glad — "

He had no more speech and no more consciousness after that. It was a sardonic comment on the situation that the last words that fell from his lips then should be those words of joy.

"Glad, glad!"

BOOK II

THE EAST AND THE WEST

CHAPTER III

THE YOUNG LADY FROM PHILADELPHIA

MISS ENID MAITLAND was a highly specialized product of the far east. I say far, viewing Colorado as a point of departure not as identifying her with the orient. The classic shades of Bryn Mawr had been the "Groves of Academus where with old Plato she had walked." Incidentally during her completion of the exhaustive curriculum of that justly famous institution she had acquired at least a bowing acquaintance with other masters of the mind.

Nor had the physical in her education been sacrificed to the mental. In her at least the *mens sana* and the *corpore sano* were alike in evidence. She had ridden to hounds many times on the anise-scented trail of the West Chester Hunt! Exciting tennis and leisurely golf had engaged her attention on the courts and greens of the Merion Cricket Club. She had buffeted "Old Ocean's gray and melancholy waste" on the beach at Cape May and at Atlantic City.

Spiritually she was a devoted member of the Episcopal Church, of the variety that abhors the

word "Protestant" in connection therewith. Altogether she reflected great credit upon her pastors and masters, spiritual and temporal, and her up-bringing in the three departments of life left little to be desired.

Upon her graduation she had been at once received and acclaimed by the "Assembly Set," of Philadelphia, to which indeed she belonged unquestioned by right of birth and position — and there was no other power under heaven by which she could have effected entrance therein; at least that is what the "outs" thought of that most exclusive circle. The old home of the Maitlands overlooking Rittenhouse Square had been the scene of her début. In all the refined and decorous gayeties of Philadelphia's ultra-fastidious society she had participated. She had even looked upon money standardized New York in its delirium of extravagance, at least in so far as a sedate and well-born Philadelphia family could countenance such golden madness. During the year she had ranged like a conqueror — pardon the masculine appellation — between Palm Beach in the South and Bar Harbor in the North. Philadelphia was proud of her, and she was not unknown in those unfortunate parts of the United States which lay without.

In all this she had remained a frank, free, un-

spoiled young woman. Life was full of zest for her, and she enjoyed it with the most un-Pennsylvanian enthusiasm.

The second summer after her coming out found her in Colorado. Robert Maitland was one of the big men of the west. He had departed from Philadelphia at an early age and had settled in Colorado while it was still in the formative period. There he had grown up with the state. The Philadelphia Maitlands could never understand it or explain it. Bob Maitland must have been, they argued, a reversion to an ancient type, a throwback to some robber baron long antecedent to William Penn. And the speculation was true. The blood of some lawless adventurer of the past, discreetly forgot by the conservative section of the family, bubbled in his veins unchecked by the repressive atmosphere of his home and his early environment.

He had thoroughly identified himself with his new surroundings and had plunged into all the activities of the west. During one period in his life he had actually served as sheriff of one of the border counties, and it was a rapid "bad man" indeed, who enjoyed any advantage over him when it came to drawing his "gun." His skill and daring had been unquestioned. He had made a name for himself which still abides, espe-

cially in the mountains where things yet remained almost as primitive as they had been from the beginning.

His fame had been accompanied by fortune, too; the cattle upon a thousand hills were his, the treasures of mines of fabulous richness were at his command. He lived in Denver in one of the greatest of the bonanza palaces on the hills of that city, confronting the snow-capped mountain range. For the rest he held stock in all sorts of corporations, was a director in numerous concerns and so on — the reader can supply the usual catalogue, they are all alike. He had married late in life and was the father of two little girls and a boy, the oldest sixteen and the youngest ten.

Going east, which he did not love, on an infrequent business trip he had renewed his acquaintance with his brother and the one ewe lamb of his brother's flock, to wit, the aforementioned Enid. He had been struck, as everybody was, by the splendid personality of the girl and had striven earnestly to disabuse her mind of the prevalent idea that there was nothing much worth while on the continent beyond the Alleghanies except scenery.

"What you need, Enid, is a ride across the plains, a sight of real mountains, beside which

these little foothills in Pennsylvania that people back here make so much of wouldn't be noticed. You want to get some of the spirited glorious freedom of the west into your conservative straight-laced little body!"

"In my day, Robert," reprovingly remarked his brother, Enid's father, "freedom was the last thing a young lady gently born and delicately nurtured would have coveted."

"Your day is past, Steve," returned the younger Maitland with shocking carelessness. "Freedom is what every woman desires now, especially when she is married. You are not in love with anybody are you, Enid?"

"With not a soul," frankly replied the girl, greatly amused at the colloquy between the two men, who though both mothered by the same woman were as dissimilar as — what shall I say, the east is from the west? Let it go at that.

"That's all right," said her uncle, relieved apparently. "I will take you out west and introduce you to some real men and —"

"If I thought it possible," interposed Mr. Stephen Maitland in his most austere and dignified manner, "that my daughter," with a perceptible emphasis on the "my," as if he and not the daughter were the principal being under consideration, "should ever so far forget what be-

longs to her station in life and her family as to allow her affections to become engaged by anyone who, from his birth and up-bringing in the er — ah —unlicensed atmosphere of the western country would be *persona non grata* to the dignified society of this ancient city and — "

"Nonsense," interrupted the younger brother bluntly. "You have lived here wrapped up in yourselves and your dinky little town so long that mental asphyxiation is threatening you all."

"I will thank you, Robert," said his brother with something approaching the manner in which he would have repelled a blasphemy, "not to refer to Philadelphia as — er — What was your most extraordinary word?"

"'Dinky,' if my recollection serves."

"Ah, precisely. I am not sure as to the meaning of the term but I conceive it to be something opprobrious. You can say what you like about me and mine, but Philadelphia, no."

"Oh, the town's right enough," returned his brother, not at all impressed. "I'm talking about people now. There are just as fine men and women in the west as in New York or Philadelphia."

"I am sure you don't mean to be offensive, Robert, but really the association of ideas in

your mention of us with that common and vulgar New York is er — unpleasant," fairly shuddered the elder Maitland.

"I'm only urging you to recognize the quality of the western people. I dare say they are of a finer type than the average here."

"From your standpoint, no doubt," continued his brother severely and somewhat wearily as if the matter were not worth all this argument. "All that I want of them is that they stay in the west where they belong and not strive to mingle with the east; there is a barrier between us and them which it is not well to cross. To permit any intermixtures of er — race or — "

"The people out there are white, Steve," interrupted his brother sardonically. "I wasn't contemplating introducing Enid here to Chinese, or Negroes, or Indians, or — "

"Don't you see," said Mr. Stephen Maitland, stubbornly waving aside this sarcastic and irrelevant comment, "from your very conversation the vast gulf that there is between you and me? Although you had every advantage in life that birth can give you, we are — I mean you have changed so greatly," he had quickly added, loath to offend.

But he mistook the light in his brother's eyes, it was a twinkle not a flash. Robert Maitland

laughed, laughed with what his brother conceived to be indecorous boisterousness.

"How little you know of the bone and sinew of this country, Steve," he exclaimed presently. Robert Maitland could not comprehend how it irritated his stately brother to be called "Steve." Nobody ever spoke of him but as Stephen Maitland — "But Lord, I don't blame you," continued the Westerner. "Any man whose vision is barred by a foothill couldn't be expected to know much of the main range and what's beyond."

"There isn't any danger of my falling in love with anybody," said Enid at last, with all the confidence of two triumphant social seasons. "I think I must be immune even to dukes," she said gayly.

"I referred to worthy young Americans of —" began her father who, to do him justice, was so satisfied with his own position that no foreign title dazzled him in the least degree.

"Rittenhouse Square," cut in Robert Maitland with amused sarcasm. "Well, Enid, you seem to have run the gamut of the east pretty thoroughly, come out and spend the summer with me in Colorado. My Denver house is open to you, we have a ranch amid the foothills, or if you are

game we can break away from civilization entirely and find some unexplored, unknown cañon in the heart of the mountains and camp there. We'll get back to nature, which seems to be impossible in Philadelphia, and you will see things and learn things that you will never see or learn anywhere else. It'll do you good, too; from what I hear, you have been going the pace and those cheeks of yours are a little too pale for so splendid a girl, you look too tired under the eyes for youth and beauty."

"I believe I am not very fit," said the girl, "and if father will permit — "

"Of course, of course," said Stephen Maitland. "You are your own mistress anyway, and having no mother" — Enid's mother had died in her infancy — "I suppose that I could not interfere or object if I wished to, but no marrying or giving in marriage: Remember that."

"Nonsense, father," answered the young woman lightly. "I am not anxious to assume the bonds of wedlock."

"Well, that settles it," said Robert Maitland. "We'll give you a royal good time. I must run up to New York and Boston for a few days, but I shall be back in a week and I can pick you up then."

"What is the house in Denver, is it er — may

I ask, provided with all modern conveniences and —" began the elder Maitland nervously.

Robert Maitland laughed.

"What do you take us for, Steve? Do you ever read the western newspapers?"

"I confess that I have not given much thought to the west since I studied geography and — *The Philadelphia Ledger* has been thought sufficient for the family since —"

"Gracious!" exclaimed Maitland. "The house cost half a million dollars if you must know it, and if there is anything that modern science can contribute to comfort and luxury that isn't in it, I don't know what it is. Shall it be the house in Denver, or the ranch, or a real camp in the wilds, Enid?"

"First the house in Denver," said Enid, "and then the ranch and then the mountains."

"Right O! That shall be the program."

"Will my daughter's life be perfectly safe from the Cowboys, Indians and Desperadoes?"

"Quite safe," answered Robert, with deep gravity. "The cowboys no longer shoot up the city and it has been years since the Indians have held up even a trolley car. The only real desperado in my acquaintance is the mildest, gentlest old stage driver in the west."

"Do you keep up an acquaintance with men

of that class, still?" asked his brother in great surprise.

"You know I was Sheriff in a border county for a number of years and —"

"But you must surely have withdrawn from all such society now."

"Out west," said Robert Maitland, "when we know a man and like him, when we have slept by him on the plains, ridden with him through the mountains, fought with him against some border terror, some bad man thirsting to kill, we don't forget him, we don't cut his acquaintance, and it doesn't make any difference whether the one or the other of us is rich or poor. I have friends who can't frame a grammatical sentence, who habitually eat with their knives, yet who are absolutely devoted to me and I to them. The man is the thing out there." He smiled and turned to Enid. "Always excepting the supremacy of woman," he added.

"How fascinating!" exclaimed the girl. "I want to go there right away."

And this was the train of events which brought about the change. Behold the young lady astride of a horse for the first time in her life in a divided skirt, that fashion prevalent elsewhere not having been accepted by the best equestriennes of Philadelphia. She was riding ahead of a lumbering

mountain wagon, surrounded by other riders, which was loaded with baggage, drawn by four sturdy broncos and followed by a number of obstinate little burros at present unencumbered with packs which would be used when they got further from civilization and the way was no longer practicable for anything on wheels.

Miss Enid Maitland was clad in a way that would have caused her father a stroke of apoplexy if he could have been suddenly made aware of her dress, if she had burst into the drawing-room without announcement for instance. Her skirt was distinctly short, she wore heavy hob-nailed shoes that laced up to her knees, she had on a bright blue sweater, a kind of a cap known as a tam-o-shanter was pinned above her glorious hair, which was closely braided and wound around her head. She wore a silk handkerchief loosely tied around her neck, a knife and revolver hung at her belt, a little watch was strapped to one wrist, a handsomely braided quirt dangled from the other, a pair of spurs adorned her heels and, most discomposing fact of all, by her side rode a handsome and dashing cavalier.

How Mr. James Armstrong might have appeared in the conventional black and white of evening clothes was not quite clear to her, for she had as yet never beheld him in that obliterat-

ing raiment, but in the habit of the west, riding trousers, heavy boots that laced to the knees, blue shirt, his head covered by a noble "Stetson," mounted on the fiery restive bronco which he rode to perfection, he was ideal. Alas for the vanity of human proposition! Mr. James Armstrong, friend and protégé these many years of Mr. Robert Maitland, mine owner and cattle man on a much smaller scale than his older friend, was desperately in love with Enid Maitland, and Enid, swept off her feet by a wooing which began with precipitant ardor so soon as he laid eyes on her, was more profoundly moved by his suit, or pursuit, than she could have imagined.

Omne ignotum pro magnifico!

She had been wooed in the conventional fashion many times and oft, on the sands of Palm Beach, along the cliffs of Newport, in the romantic glens of Mount Desert, in the old fashioned drawing-room overlooking Rittenhouse Square. She had been proposed to in motor cars, on the decks of yachts and once even while riding to hounds, but there had been a touch of sameness about it all. Never had she been made love to with the headlong gallantry, with the dashing precipitation of the west. It had swept her from her moorings. She found almost before she was aware of it that her past experience now stood her in little stead.

She awoke to a sudden realization of the fact that she was practically pledged to James Armstrong after an acquaintance of three weeks in Denver and on the ranch.

Business of the most important and critical nature required Armstrong's presence east at this juncture, and willy-nilly there was no way he could put off his departure longer. He had to leave the girl with an uneasy conscience that though he had her half-way promise, he had her but half-way won. He had snatched the ultimate day from his business demands to ride with her on the first stage of her journey to the mountains.

CHAPTER IV

THE GAME PLAYED IN THE USUAL WAY

THE road on which they advanced into the mountains was well made and well kept up. The cañon through the foothills was not very deep — for Colorado — and the ascent was gentle. Naturally it wound in every direction following the devious course of the river which it frequently crossed from one side to the other on rude log bridges. A brisk gallop of a half mile or so on a convenient stretch of comparatively level going put the two in the lead far ahead of the lumbering wagon and out of sight of those others of the party who had elected to go a horseback. There was perhaps a tacit agreement among the latter not to break in upon this growing friendship or, more frankly, not to interfere in a developing love affair.

The cañon broadened here and there at long intervals and ranch houses were found in every clearing, but these were few and far between and for the most part Armstrong and Enid Maitland rode practically alone save for the passing of an occasional lumber wagon.

"You can't think," began the man, as they drew rein after a splendid gallop and the somewhat tired horses readily subsided into a walk, "how I hate to go back and leave you."

"And you can't think how loath I am to have you return," the girl flashed out at him with a sidelong glance from her bright blue eyes and a witching smile from her scarlet lips.

"Enid Maitland," said the man, "you know I just worship you. I'd like to sweep you out of your saddle, lift you to the bow of mine and ride away with you. I can't keep my hands off you, I—"

Before she realized what he would be about he swerved his horse toward her, his arm went around her suddenly. Taken completely off her guard she could make no resistance, indeed she scarcely knew what to expect until he crushed her to him and kissed her, almost roughly, full on the lips.

"How dare you!" cried the girl, her face aflame, freeing herself at last, and swinging her own horse almost to the edge of the road which here ran on an excavation some fifty feet above the river.

"How dare I?" laughed the audacious man, apparently no whit abashed by her indignation.

"When I think of my opportunity I am amazed at my moderation."

"Your opportunity, your moderation?"

"Yes; when I had you helpless I took but one kiss, I might have held you longer and taken a hundred."

"And by what right did you take that one?" haughtily demanded the outraged young woman, looking at him beneath level brows while the color slowly receded from her face. She had never been kissed by a man other than a blood relation in her life — remember, suspicious reader, that she was from Philadelphia — and she resented this sudden and unauthorized caress with every atom and instinct of her still somewhat conventional being.

"But aren't you half-way engaged to me?" he pleaded in justification, seeing the unwonted seriousness with which she had received his impudent advance. "Didn't you agree to give me a chance?"

"I did say that I liked you very much," she admitted, "no man better, and that I thought you might —"

"Well, then —" he began.

But she would not be interrupted.

"I did not mean that you should enjoy all the privileges of a conquest before you had

won me. I will thank you not to do that again, sir."

"It seems to have had a very different effect upon you than it did upon me," replied the man fervently. "I loved you before, but now, since I have kissed you, I worship you."

"It hasn't affected me that way," retorted the girl promptly, her face still frowning and indignant. "Not at all, and —"

"Forgive me, Enid," pleaded the other. "I just couldn't help it. You were so beautiful I had to. I took the chance. You are not accustomed to our ways."

"Is this your habit in your love affairs?" asked the girl swiftly and not without a spice of feminine malice.

"I never had any love affairs before," he replied with a ready masculine mendacity, "at least none worth mentioning. But you see this is the west, we have gained what we have by demanding every inch that nature offers, and then claiming the all. That's the way we play the game out here and that's the way we win."

"But I have not yet learned to play the 'game,' as you call it, by any such rules," returned the young woman determinedly, "and it is not the way to win me if I am the stake."

"What is the way?" asked the man anxiously.

"Show me and I'll take it no matter what its difficulty."

"Ah, for me to point out the way would be to play traitor to myself," she answered, relenting and relaxing a little before his devoted wooing. "You must find it without assistance. I can only tell you one thing."

"And what is that?"

"You do not advance toward the goal by such actions as those of a moment since."

"Look here," said the other suddenly. "I am not ashamed of what I did, and I'm not going to pretend that I am, either."

"You ought to be," severely.

"Well, maybe so, but I'm not. I couldn't help it any more than I could help loving you the minute I saw you. Put yourself in my place."

"But I am not in your place, and I can't put myself there. I do not wish to. If it be true, as you say, that you have grown to — care so much for me and so quickly — "

"If it be true?" came the sharp interruption as the man bent toward her fairly devouring her with his bold, ardent gaze.

"Well, since it is true," she admitted under the compulsion of his protest, "that fact is the only possible excuse for your action."

"You find some justification for me, then!"

"No, only a possibility, but whether it be true or not, I do not feel that way — yet."

There was a saving grace in that last word, which gave him a little heart. He would have spoken, but she suffered no interruption, saying:

"I have been wooed before, but — "

"True, unless the human race has become suddenly blind," he said softly under his breath.

"But never in such ungentle ways."

"I suppose you have never run up against a real red-blooded man like me before."

"If red-blooded be evidenced mainly by lack of self-control, perhaps I have not. Yet there are men whom I have met who would not need to apologize for their qualities even to you, Mr. James Armstrong."

"Don't say that. Evidently I make but poor progress in my wooing. Never have I met with a woman quite like you." — And in that indeed lay some of her charm, and she might have replied in exactly the same language and with exactly the same meaning to him.— "I am no longer a boy. I must be fifteen years older than you are, for I am thirty-five."

The difference between their years was not quite so great as he declared, but womanlike the girl let the statement pass unchallenged.

"And I wouldn't insult your intelligence by

saying you are the only woman that I have ever made love to, but there is a vast difference between making love to a woman and loving one. I have just found that out for the first time. I marvel at the past, and I am ashamed of it, but I thank God that I have been saved for this opportunity. I want to win you, and I am going to do it, too. In many things I don't match up with the people with whom you train. I was born out here, and I've made myself. There are things that have happened in the making that I am not especially proud of, and I am not at all satisfied with the results, especially since I have met you. The better I know you the less pleased I am with Jim Armstrong, but there are possibilities in me, I rather believe, and with you for inspiration, Heavens!" — the man flung out his hand with a fine gesture of determination. "They say that the east and west don't naturally mingle, but it's a lie, you and I can beat the world."

The woman thrilled to his gallant wooing. Any woman would have done so, some of them would have lost their heads, but Enid Maitland was an exceedingly cool young person, for she was not quite swept off her feet, and did not quite lose her balance.

"I like to hear you say things like that," she answered. "Nobody quite like you has ever

made love to me, and certainly not in your way, and that's the reason I have given you a half-way promise to think about it. I was sorry that you could not be with us on this adventure, but now I am rather glad, especially if the even temper of my way is to be interrupted by anything like the outburst of a few moments since."

"I am glad, too," admitted the man. "For I declare I couldn't help it. If I have to be with you either you have got to be mine, or else you would have to decide that it could never be, and then I'd go off and fight it out."

"Leave me to myself," said the girl earnestly, "for a little while; it's best so. I would not take the finest, noblest man on earth —"

"And I am not that."

"Unless I loved him. There is something very attractive about your personality. I don't know in my heart whether it is that or —"

"Good," said the man, as she hesitated. "That's enough," he gathered up the reins and whirled his horse suddenly in the road, "I am going back. I'll wait for your return to Denver, and then —"

"That's best," answered the girl.

She stretched out her hand to him, leaning backward. If he had been a different kind of a man he would have kissed it, as it was he took it

in his own hand and almost crushed it with a fierce grip.

"We'll shake on that, little girl," he said, and then without a backward glance he put spurs to his horse and galloped furiously down the road.

No, she decided then and there, she did not love him, not yet. Whether she ever would she could not tell. And yet she was half bound to him. The recollection of his kiss was not altogether a pleasant memory; he had not done himself any good by that bold assault upon her modesty, that reckless attempt to rifle the treasure of her lips. No man had ever really touched her heart, although many had engaged her interest. Her experiences therefore were not definitive or conclusive. If she had truly loved James Armstrong, in spite of all that she might have said, she would have thrilled to the remembrance of that wild caress. The chances, therefore, were somewhat heavily against him that morning as he rode hopefully down the trail alone.

His experiences in love affairs were much greater than hers. She was by no means the first woman he had kissed — remember suspicious reader that he was *not* from Philadelphia! —hers were not the first ears into which he had poured passionate protestations. He was neither better nor worse than most men, perhaps he fairly

enough represented the average, but surely fate had something better in store for such a superb woman — a girl of such attainments and such infinite possibilities, she must mate higher than with the average man. Perhaps there was a sub-consciousness of this in her mind as she silently waited to be overtaken by the rest of the party.

There were curious glances and strange speculations in that little company as they saw her sitting her horse alone. A few moments before James Armstrong had passed them at a gallop, he had waved his hand as he dashed by and had smiled at them, hope giving him a certain assurance, although his confidence was scarcely warranted by the facts.

His demeanor was not in consonance with Enid's somewhat grave and somewhat troubled present aspect. She threw off her preoccupation instantly and easily, however, and joined readily enough in the merry conversation of the way.

Mr. Robert Maitland, as Armstrong had said, had known him from a boy. There were things in his career of which Maitland did not and could not approve, but they were of the past, he reflected, and Armstrong was after all a pretty good sort. Mr. Maitland's standards were not at all those of his Philadelphia brother, but they were very high. His experiences of men had been dif-

ferent; he thought that Armstrong, having certainly by this time reached years of discretion, could be safely entrusted with the precious treasure of the young girl who had been committed to his care, and for whom his affection grew as his knowledge of and acquaintanceship with her increased.

As for Mrs. Maitland and the two girls and the youngster, they were Armstrong's devoted friends. They knew nothing about his past, indeed there were things in it of which Maitland himself was ignorant, and which had they been known to him might have caused him to withhold even his tentative acquiescence in the possibilities.

Most of these things were known to old Kirkby who with masterly skill, amusing nonchalance and amazing profanity, albeit most of it under his breath lest he shock the ladies, tooled along the four nervous excited broncos who drew the big supply wagon. Kirkby was Maitland's oldest and most valued friend. He had been the latter's deputy sheriff, he had been a cowboy and a lumberman, a mighty hunter and a successful miner, and now although he had acquired a reasonable competence, and had a nice little wife and a pleasant home in the mountain village at the entrance to the cañon, he drove stage for pleasure rather than for profit. He had given over his

daily twenty-five mile jaunt from Morrison to Troutdale to other hands for a short space that he might spend a little time with his old friend and the family, who were all greatly attached to him, on this outing.

Enid Maitland, a girl of a kind that Kirkby had never seen before, had won the old man's heart during the weeks spent on the Maitland ranch. He had grown fond of her, and he did not think that Mr. James Armstrong merited that which he evidently so overwhelmingly desired. Kirkby was well along in years, but he was quite capable of playing a man's game for all that, and he intended to play it in this instance.

Nobody scanned Enid Maitland's face more closely than he, sitting humped up on the front seat of the wagon, one foot on the high brake, his head sunk almost to the level of his knee, his long whip in his hand, his keen and somewhat fierce brown eyes taking in every detail of what was going on about him. Indeed there was but little that came before him that old Kirkby did not see.

CHAPTER V

THE STORY AND THE LETTERS

IMAGINE, if you please, the forest primeval; yes, the murmuring pines and the hemlocks of the poem as well, by the side of a rapidly rushing mountain torrent fed by the eternal snows of the lofty peaks of the great range. A level stretch of grassy land where a mountain brook joined the creek was dotted with clumps of pines and great boulders rolled down from the everlasting hills — half an acre of open clearing. On the opposite side of the brook the cañon wall rose almost sheer for perhaps five hundred feet, ending in jagged, needle-edged pinnacles of rock, sharp, picturesque and beautiful. A thousand feet above ran the timber line, and four thousand feet above that the crest of the greatest peak in the main range.

The white tents of the little encampment which had gleamed so brightly in the clear air and radiant sunshine of Colorado, now stood dim and ghost-like in the red reflection of a huge camp fire. It was the evening of the first day in the wilderness.

For two days since leaving the wagon, the Maitland party with its long train of burros heavily packed, its horsemen and the steady plodders on foot, had advanced into unexplored and almost inaccessible retreats of the mountains — into the primitive indeed! In this delightful spot they had pitched their tents and the permanent camp had been made. Wood was abundant, the water at hand was as cold as ice, as clear as crystal and as soft as milk. There was pasturage for the horses and burros on the other side of the mountain brook. The whole place was a little amphitheater which humanity occupied perhaps the first time since creation.

Unpacking the burros, setting up the tents, making the camp, building the fire had used up the late remainder of the day which was theirs when they had arrived. Opportunity would come to-morrow to explore the country, to climb the range, to try the stream that tumbled down a succession of waterfalls to the right of the camp and roared and rushed merrily around its feet until, swelled by the volume of the brook, it lost itself in tree-clad depths far beneath. To-night rest after labor, to-morrow play after rest.

The evening meal was over. Enid could not help thinking with what scorn and contempt her father would have regarded the menu, how his

gorge would have risen — hers too for that matter! — had it been placed before him on the old colonial mahogany of the dining-room in Philadelphia. But up there in the wilds she had eaten the coarse homely fare with the zest and relish of the most seasoned ranger of the hills. Anxious to be of service, she had burned her hands and smoked her hair and scorched her face by usurping the functions of the young ranchman who had been brought along as cook, and had actually fried the bacon herself! Imagine a goddess with a frying pan! The black thick coffee and the condensed milk, drunk from the graniteware cup, had a more delicious aroma and a more delightful taste than the finest Mocha and Java in the daintiest porcelain of France. *Optimum condimentum.* The girl was frankly, ravenously hungry, the air, the altitude, the exertion, the excitement made her able to eat anything and enjoy it.

She was gloriously beautiful, too; even her brief experience in the west had brought back the missing roses to her cheek, and had banished the bister circles from beneath her eyes. Robert Maitland, lazily reclining propped up against a boulder, his feet to the fire, smoking an old pipe that would have given his brother the horrors, looked with approving complacency upon her,

confident and satisfied that his prescription was working well. Nor was he the only one who looked at her that way. Marion and Emma, his two daughters, worshiped their handsome Philadelphia cousin and they sat one on either side of her on the great log lying between the tents and the fire. Even Bob junior condescended to give her approving glances. The whole camp was at her feet. Mrs. Maitland had been greatly taken by her young niece. Kirkby made no secret of his devotion; Arthur Bradshaw and Henry Phillips, each a "tenderfoot" of the extremest character, friends of business connections in the east, who were spending their vacation with Maitland, shared in the general devotion; to say nothing of George the cook, and Pete, the packer and "horse wrangler."

Phillips, who was an old acquaintance of Enid's, had tried his luck with her back east and had sense enough to accept as final his failure. Bradshaw was a solemn young man without that keen sense of humor which was characteristic of the west. The others were suitably dressed for adventure, but Bradshaw's idea of an appropriate costume was distinguished chiefly by long green felt puttees which swathed his huge calves and excited curious inquiry and ribald comment from the surprised denizens of each mountain hamlet

through which they had passed, to all of which Bradshaw remained serenely oblivious. The young man, who does not enter especially into this tale, was a vestryman of the church in his home in the suburbs of Philadelphia. His piety had been put to a severe strain in the mountains.

That day everybody had to work on the trail — everybody wanted to for that matter. The hardest labor consisted in the driving of the burros. Unfortunately there was no good and trained leader among them through an unavoidable mischance, and the campers had great difficulty in keeping the burros on the trail. To Arthur Bradshaw had been allotted the most obstinate, cross-grained and determined of the unruly band, and old Kirkby and George paid particular attention to instructing him in the gentle art of manipulating him over the rocky mountain trail.

"Wall," said Kirkby with his somewhat languid, drawling, nasal voice, "that there burro's like a ship w'ich I often seed 'em w'n I was a kid down east afore I come out to God's country. Nature has pervided 'em with a kind of a hellum. I remember if you wanted the boat to go to the right you shoved the hellum over to the left. Sta'boad an' port was the terms as I recollects 'em. It's jest the same with burros, you takes 'em by the hellum, that's by the tail, git a good tight

twist on it an' ef you want him to head to the right, slew his stern sheets around to the left, an' you got to be keerful you don't git no kick back w'ich if it lands on you is worse 'n the ree-coil of a mule."

Arthur faithfully followed directions, narrowly escaping the outraged brute's small but sharp pointed heels on occasion. His efforts not being productive of much success, finally in his despair he resorted to brute strength; he would pick the little animal up bodily, pack and all — he was a man of powerful physique — and swing him around until his head pointed in the right direction; then with a prayer that the burro would keep it there for a few rods anyway, he would set him down and start him all over again. The process, oft repeated, became monotonous after a while. Arthur was a slow thinking man, deliberate in action, he stood it as long as he possibly could. Kirkby who rode one horse and led two others, and therefore was exempt from burro driving, observed him with great interest. He and Bradshaw had strayed way behind the rest of the party.

At last Arthur's resistance, patience and piety, strained to the breaking point, gave way suddenly. Primitive instincts rose to the surface and overwhelmed him like a flood. He deliber-

ately sat down on a fallen tree by the side of a trail, the burro halting obediently, turned and faced him with hanging head apparently conscious that he merited the disapprobation that was being heaped upon him, for from the desperate tenderfoot there burst forth so amazing, so fluent, so comprehensive a torrent of assorted profanity, that even the old past master in objurgation was astonished and bewildered. Where did Bradshaw, mild and inoffensive, get it? His proficiency would have appalled his Rector and amazed his fellow vestrymen. Not the Jackdaw of Rheims himself was so cursed as that little burro. Kirkby sat on his horse in fits of silent laughter until the tears ran down his cheeks, the only outward and visible expression of his mirth.

Arthur only stopped when he had thoroughly emptied himself, possibly of an accumulation of years of repression.

"Wall," said Kirkby, "you sure do overmatch anyone I ever heard w'en it comes to cursin'. W'y you could gimme cards an' spades an' beat me, an' I was thought to have some gift that-a-way in the old days."

"I didn't begin to exhaust myself," answered Bradshaw, shortly, "and what I did say didn't equal the situation. I'm going home."

"I wouldn't do that," urged the old man.

"Here, you take the hosses an' I'll tackle the burro."

"Gladly," said Arthur. "I would rather ride an elephant and drive a herd of them than waste another minute on this infernal little mule."

The story was too good to keep, and around the camp fire that night Kirkby drawled it forth. There was a freedom and easiness of intercourse in the camp, which was natural enough. Cook, teamster, driver, host, guest, men, women, children, and I had almost said burros, stood on the same level. They all ate and lived together. The higher up the mountain range you go, the deeper into the wilderness you plunge, the further away from the conventional you draw, the more homogeneous becomes society and the less obvious are the irrational and unscientific distinctions of the lowlands. The guinea stamp fades and the man and the woman are pure gold or base metal inherently and not by any artificial standard.

George, the cattle man who cooked, and Peter, the horse wrangler, who assisted Kirkby in looking after the stock, enjoyed the episode uproariously, and would fain have had the exact language repeated to them, but here Robert Maitland demurred, much to Arthur's relief, for he was thoroughly humiliated by the whole performance.

It was very pleasant lounging around the camp fire, and one good story easily led to another.

"It was in these very mountains," said Robert Maitland, at last, when his turn came, "that there happened one of the strangest and most terrible adventures that I ever heard of. I have pretty much forgotten the lay of the land, but I think it wasn't very far from here that there is one of the most stupendous cañons through the range. Nobody ever goes there — I don't suppose anybody has ever been there since. It must have been at least five years ago that it all happened."

"It was four years an' nine months, exactly, Bob," drawled old Kirkby, who well knew what was coming.

"Yes, I dare say you are right. I was up at Evergreen at the time, looking after timber interests, when a mule came wandering into the camp, saddle and pack still on his back."

"I knowed that there mule," said Kirkby. "I'd sold it to a feller named Newbold, that had come out yere an' married Louise Rosser, old man Rosser's daughter, an' him dead, an' she bein' an orphan, an' this feller bein' a fine young man from the east, not a bit of a tenderfoot nuther, a minin' engineer he called hisself."

"Well, I happened to be there too, you remem-

ber," continued Maitland, "and they made up a party to go and hunt up the man, thinking something might have happened."

"You see," explained Kirkby, "we was all mighty fond of Louise Rosser. The hull camp was actin' like a father to her at the time, so long's she hadn't nobody else. We was all at the weddin', too, some six months afore. The gal married him on her own hook, of course, nobody makin' her, but somehow she didn't seem none too happy, although Newbold, who was a perfect gent, treated her white as far as we knowed."

The old man stopped again and resumed his pipe.

"Kirkby, you tell the story," said Maitland.

"Not me," said Kirkby. "I have seen men shot afore for takin' words out'n other men's mouths an' I ain't never done that yit."

"You always were one of the most silent men I ever saw," laughed George. "Why, that day Pete yere got shot accidental an' had his whole breast tore out w'en we was lumbering over on Black Mountain, all you said was, 'Wash him off, put some axle grease on him an' tie him up.'"

"That's so," answered Pete, "an' there must have been somethin' powerful soothin' in that axle grease, for here I am, safe an' sound, to this day."

"It takes an old man," assented Kirkby, "to know when to keep his mouth shet. I learned it at the muzzle of a gun."

"I never knew before," laughed Maitland, "how still a man you can be. Well, to resume the story, having nothing to do, I went out with the posse the sheriff gathered up — "

"Him not thinkin' there had been any foul play," ejaculated the old man.

"No, certainly not."

"Well, what happened, Uncle Bob," inquired Enid.

"Just you wait," said young Bob, who had heard the story. "This is an awful good story, Cousin Enid."

"I can't wait much longer," returned the girl. "Please go on."

"Two days after we left the camp, we came across an awful figure, ragged, blood stained, wasted to a skeleton, starved — "

"I have seen men in extreme cases afore," interposed Kirkby, "but never none like him."

"Nor I," continued Maitland.

"Was it Newbold?" asked Enid.

"Yes."

"And what had happened to him?"

"He and his wife had been prospecting in these very mountains, she had fallen over a cliff and

broken herself so terribly that Newbold had to shoot her."

"What!" exclaimed Bradshaw. "You don't mean that he actually killed her?"

"That's what he done," answered old Kirkby.

"Poor man," murmured Enid.

"But why?" asked Phillips.

"They were five days away from a settlement, there wasn't a human being within a hundred and fifty miles of them, not even an Indian," continued Maitland. "She was so frightfully broken and mangled that he couldn't carry her away."

"But why couldn't he leave her and go for help?" asked Bradshaw.

"The wolves, the bears, or the vultures would have got her. These woods and mountains were full of them then and there are some of them left now, I guess."

The two little girls crept closer to their grown up cousin, each casting anxious glances beyond the fire light.

"Oh, you're all right, little gals," said Kirkby, reassuringly, "they wouldn't come nigh us while this fire is burnin' an' they're pretty well hunted out I guess; 'sides, there's men yere who'd like nothin' better'n drawin' a bead on a big b'ar."

"And so," continued Maitland, "when she begged him to shoot her, to put her out of her

misery, he did so and then he started back to the settlement to tell his story and stumbled on us looking after him."

"What happened then?"

"I went back to the camp," said Maitland. "We loaded Newbold on a mule and took him with us. He was so crazy he didn't know what was happening, he went over the shooting again and again in his delirium. It was awful."

"Did he die?"

"I don't think so," was the answer, "but really I know nothing further about him. There were some good women in that camp, and we put him in their hands, and I left shortly afterwards."

"I kin tell the rest," said old Kirkby. "Knowin' more about the mountains than most people hereabouts I led the men that didn't go back with Bob an' Newbold to the place w'ere he said his woman fell, an' there we found her, her body, leastways."

"But the wolves?" queried the girl.

"He'd drug her into a kind of a holler and piled rocks over her. He'd gone down into the cañon, w'ich was somethin' frightful, an' then climbed up to w'ere she'd lodged. We had plenty of rope, havin' brought it along a purpose, an' we let ourselves down to the shelf where she was a lyin'. We wrapped her body up in

blankets an' roped it an' finally drug her up on the old Injun trail, leastways I suppose it was made afore there was any Injuns, an' brought her back to Evergreen camp, w'ich the only thing about it that was green was the swing doors on the saloon. We got a parson out from Denver an' give her a Christian burial."

"It that all?" asked Enid as the old man paused again.

"Nope."

"Oh, the man?" exclaimed the woman with quick intuition.

"He recovered his senses so they told us, an' w'en we got back he'd gone."

"Where?" was the instant question.

Old Kirkby stretched out his hands.

"Don't ax me," he said. "He'd jest gone. I ain't never seed or heerd of him sence. Poor little Louise Rosser, she did have a hard time."

"Yes," said Enid, "but I think the man had a harder time than she. He loved her?"

"It looked like it," answered Kirkby.

"If you had seen him, his remorse, his anguish, his horror," said Maitland, "you wouldn't have had any doubt about it. But it is getting late. In the mountains everybody gets up at daybreak. Your sleeping bags are in the tents, ladies, time to go to bed."

As the party broke up, old Kirkby rose slowly to his feet. He looked meaningly toward the young woman, upon whom the spell of the tragedy still lingered, he nodded toward the brook, and then repeated his speaking glance at her. His meaning was patent, although no one else had seen the covert invitation.

"Come, Kirkby," said the girl in quick response, "you shall be my escort. I want a drink before I turn in. No, never mind," she said, as Bradshaw and Phillips both volunteered, "not this time."

The old frontiersman and the young girl strolled off together. They stopped by the brink of the rushing torrent a few yards away. The noise that it made drowned the low tones of their voices and kept the others, busy preparing to retire, from hearing what they said.

"That ain't quite all the story, Miss Enid," said the old trapper meaningly. "There was another man."

"What!" exclaimed the girl.

"Oh, there wasn't nothin' wrong with Louise Rosser, w'ich she was Louise Newbold, but there was another man. I suspected it afore, that's why she was sad. W'en we found her body I knowed it."

"I don't understand."

"These'll explain," said Kirkby. He drew out from his rough hunting coat a package of soiled letters; they were carefully enclosed in an oil skin and tied with a faded ribbon. "You see," he continued, holding them in his hand, yet carefully concealing them from the people at the fire. "W'en she fell off the cliff — somehow the mule lost his footin', nobody never knowed how, leastways the mule was dead an' couldn't tell — she struck on a spur or shelf about a hundred feet below the brink. Evidently she was carryin' the letters in her dress. Her bosom was frightfully tore open an' the letters was lying there. Newbold didn't see 'em, because he went down into the cañon an' came up to the shelf, or butte head, w'ere the body was lyin', but we dropped down. I was the first man down an' I got 'em. Nobody else seein' me, an' there ain't no human eyes, not even my wife's, that's ever looked on them letters, except mine and now yourn."

"You are going to give them to me?"

"I am," said Kirkby.

"But why?"

"I want you to know the hull story."

"But why, again?"

"I rather guess them letters'll tell," answered the old man evasively, "an' I like you, and I don't want to see you throwed away."

"Read the letters," he said. "They'll tell the story. Good night"

"What do you mean?" asked the girl, curiously, thrilling to the solemnity of the moment, the seriousness, the kind affection of the old frontiersman, the weird scene, the fire light, the tents gleaming ghostlike, the black wall of the cañon and the tops of the mountain range broadening out beneath the stars in the clear sky where they twinkled above her head. The strange and terrible story, and now the letters in her hand which somehow seemed to be imbued with human feeling, greatly affected her! Kirkby patted her on the shoulder.

"Read the letters," he said. "They'll tell the story. Good-night."

CHAPTER VI

THE POOL AND THE WATER SPRITE

LONG after the others in the camp had sunk into the profound slumber of weary bodies and good consciences, a solitary candle in the small tent occupied by Enid Maitland alone, gave evidence that she was busy over the letters which Kirkby had handed to her.

It was a very thoughtful girl indeed who confronted the old frontiersman the next morning. At the first convenient opportunity when they were alone together she handed him the packet of letters.

"Have you read 'em?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Wall, you keep 'em," said the old man gravely. "Mebbe you'll want to read 'em agin."

"But I don't understand why you want me to have them."

"Wall, I'm not quite sure myself why, but leastways I do an'—"

"I shall be very glad to keep them," said the girl still more gravely, slipping them into one of the pockets of her hunting shirt as she spoke.

The packet was not bulky, the letters were not many nor were they of any great length. She could easily carry them on her person and in some strange and inexplicable way she was rather glad to have them. She could not, as she had said, see any personal application to herself in them, and yet in some way she did feel that the solution of the mystery would be hers some day. Especially did she think this on account of the strange but quiet open emphasis of the old hunter.

There was much to do about the camp in the mornings. Horses and burros to be looked after, fire wood to be cut, plans for the day arranged, excursions planned, mountain climbs projected. Later on unwonted hands must be taught to cast the fly for the mountain trout which filled the brook and pool, and all the varied duties, details and fascinating possibilities of camp life must be explained to the new-comers.

The first few days were days of learning and preparation, days of mishap and misadventure, of joyous laughter over blunders in getting settled, or learning the mysteries of rod and line, of becoming hardened and acclimated. The weather proved perfect; it was late October and the nights were very cold, but there was no rain and the bright sunny days were invigorating and

exhilarating to the last degree. They had huge fires and plenty of blankets and the colder it was in the night the better they slept.

It was an intensely new experience for the girl from Philadelphia, but she showed a marked interest and adaptability, and entered with the keenest zest into all the opportunities of the charming days. She was a good sportswoman and she soon learned to throw a fly with the best of them. Old Kirkby took her under his especial protection, and as he was one of the best rods in the mountains, she enjoyed every advantage.

She had always lived in the midst of life. Except in the privacy of her own chamber she had rarely ever been alone before — not twenty feet from a man: she thought whimsically; but here the charm of solitude attracted her, she liked to take her rod and wander off alone. She actually enjoyed it.

The main stream that flowed down the cañon was fed by many affluents from the mountain sides, and in each of them voracious trout appeared. She explored them as she had opportunity. Sometimes with the others but more often by herself. She discovered charming and exquisite nooks, little stretches of grass, the size perhaps of a small room, flower decked, ferny bordered, overshadowed by tall gaunt pine trees,

the sunlight filtering through their thin foliage, checkering the verdant carpet beneath. Huge moss covered boulders, wet with the everdashing spray of the roaring brooks, lay in mid-stream and with other natural stepping stones hard-by invited her to cross to either shore. Waterfalls laughed musically in her ears, deep still pools tempted her skill and address.

Sometimes leaving rod and basket by the waterside, she climbed some particularly steep acclivity of the cañon wall and stood poised, wind blown, a nymph of the woods, upon some pinnacle of rock rising needle like at the cañon's edge above the sea of verdure which the wind waved to and fro beneath her feet. There in the bright light, with the breeze blowing her golden hair, she looked like some Norse goddess, blue eyed, exhilarated, triumphant.

She was a perfectly formed woman on the ancient noble lines of Milo rather than the degenerate softness of Medici. She grew stronger of limb and fuller of breath, quicker and steadier of eye and hand, cooler of nerve, in these demanding, compelling adventures among the rocks in this mountain air. She was not a tall woman, indeed slightly under rather than over the medium size, but she was so ideally proportioned, she carried herself with the fearlessness of a

young chamois, that she looked taller than she was. There was not an ounce of superfluous flesh upon her, yet she had the grace of Hebe, the strength of Pallas Athene, and the swiftness of motion of Atalanta. Had she but carried bow and spear, had she worn tunic and sandals, she might have stood for Diana and she would have had no cause to blush by comparison with the finest model of Praxiteles' chisel or the most splendid and glowing example of Appelles' brush.

Uncle Robert was delighted with her. His contribution to her western outfit was a small Winchester. She displayed astonishing aptitude under his instructions and soon became wonderfully proficient with that deadly weapon and with a revolver also. There was little danger to be apprehended in the daytime among the mountains the more experienced men thought, still it was wise for the girl always to have a weapon in readiness, so in her journeyings, either the Winchester was slung from her shoulder or carried in her hand, or else the Colt dangled at her hip. At first she took both, but finally it was with reluctance that she could be persuaded to take either. Nothing had ever happened. Save for a few birds now and then she had seemed the only tenant of the wildernesses of her choice.

One night after a camping experience of nearly

two weeks in the mountains, and just before the time for breaking up and going back to civilization, she announced that early the next morning she was going down the cañon for a day's fishing excursion.

None of the party had ever followed the little river very far, but it was known that some ten miles below the stream merged in a lovely gem-like lake in a sort of crater in the mountains. From thence by a series of waterfalls it descended through the foothills to the distant plains beyond. The others had arranged to climb one especially dangerous and ambition provoking peak which towered above them and which had never before been surmounted so far as they knew. Enid enjoyed mountain climbing. She liked the uplift in feeling that came from going higher and higher till some crest was gained, but on this occasion they urged her to accompany them in vain.

When the fixity of her decision was established she had a number of offers to accompany her, but declined them all, bidding the others go their way. Mrs. Maitland, who was not feeling very well, old Kirkby, who had climbed too many mountains to feel much interest in that game, and Pete, the horse wrangler, who had to look after the stock, remained in camp; the others, with the ex-

ception of Enid, started at daybreak for their long ascent. She waited until the sun was about an hour high and then bade good-by to the three and began the descent of the cañon. Traveling light for she was going far — farther indeed than she knew — she left her Winchester at home, but carried the revolver with the fishing tackle and substantial luncheon.

Now the river — a river by courtesy only — and the cañon turned sharply back on themselves just beyond the little meadow where the camp was pitched. Past the tents that had been their home for this joyous period the river ran due east for a few hundred feet, after which it curved sharply, doubled back and flowed westward for several miles before it gradually swung around to the east on its proper course again.

It had been Enid's purpose to cut across the hills and strike the river where it turned eastward once more, avoiding the long detour back. In fact she had declared her intention of doing that to Kirkby and he had given her careful directions so that she should not get lost in the mountains.

But she had plenty of time and no excuse or reason for saving it; she never tired of the charm of the cañon; therefore, instead of plunging directly over the spur of the range, she followed

the familiar trail and after she had passed westward far beyond the limits of the camp to the turning, she decided, in accordance with that utterly irresponsible thing, a woman's will, that she would not go down the cañon that day after all, but that she would cross back over the range and strike the river a few miles above the camp and go up the cañon instead.

She had been up in that direction a few times, but only for a short distance, as the ascent above the camp was very sharp; in fact for a little more than a mile the brook was only a succession of waterfalls; the best fishing was below the camp and the finest woods were deeper in the cañon. She suddenly concluded that she would like to see what was up in that unexplored section of the country and so, with scarcely a momentary hesitation, she abandoned her former plan and began the ascent of the range.

Upon decisions so lightly taken what momentous consequences depend? Whether she should go up the stream or down the stream, whether she should follow the rivulet to its source or descend it to its mouth, was apparently a matter of little moment, yet her whole life turned absolutely upon that decision. The idle and unconsidered choice of the hour was fraught with gravest possibilities. Had that election been

made with any suspicion, with any foreknowledge, had it come as the result of careful reasoning or far-seeing of probabilities, it might have been understandable, but an impulse, a whim, the vagrant idea of an idle hour, the careless chance of a moment, and behold! a life is changed. On one side were youth and innocence, freedom and contentment, a happy day, a good rest by the cheerful fire at night; on the other, peril of life, struggle, love, jealousy, self-sacrifice, devotion, suffering, knowledge — scarcely Eve herself when she stood apple in hand with ignorance and pleasure around her and enlightenment and sorrow before her, had greater choice to make.

How fortunate we are that the future is veiled, that the psalmist's prayer that he might know his end and be certified how long he had to live is one that will not and cannot be granted; that it has been given to but One to foresee His own future, for no power apparently could enable us to stand up against what might be, because we are only human beings not sufficiently alight with the spark divine. We wait for the end because we must, but thank God we know it not until it comes.

Nothing of this appeared to the girl that bright sunny morning. Fate hid in those moun-

tains under the guise of fancy. Lighthearted, carefree, fitted with buoyant joy over every fact of life, she left the flowing water and scaled the cliff beyond which in the wilderness she was to find, after all, the world.

The ascent was longer and more difficult and dangerous than she had imagined when she first confronted it, perhaps it was typical and foretold her progress. More than once she had to stop and carefully examine the face of the cañon wall for a practicable trail; more than once she had to exercise extremest care in her climb, but she was a bold and fearless mountaineer by this time and at last surmounting every difficulty she stood panting slightly, a little tired but triumphant, upon the summit.

The ground was rocky and broken, the timber line was close above her and she judged that she must be several miles from the camp. The cañon was very crooked, she could see only a few hundred yards of it in any direction. She scanned her circumscribed limited horizon eagerly for the smoke from the great fire that they always kept burning in the camp, but not a sign of it was visible. She was evidently a thousand feet above the river whence she had come. Her standing ground was a rocky ridge which fell away more gently on the other side for perhaps two hundred

feet toward the same brook. She could see through vistas in the trees the uptossed peaks of the main range, bare, chaotic, snow covered, lonely, majestic, terrible.

The awe of the everlasting hills is greater than that of the heaving sea. Save in the infrequent periods of calm, the latter always moves, the mountains are the same for all time. The ocean is quick, noisy, living; the mountains are calm, still — dead.

The girl stood as it were on the roof of the world, a solitary human being, so far as she knew, in the eye of God above her. Ah, but the Eyes Divine look long and see far; things beyond the human ken are all revealed. None of the party had ever come this far from the camp in this direction she knew. And she was glad to be the first, as she fatuously thought, to observe that majestic solitude.

Surveying the great range she wondered where the peak climbers might be. Keen sighted though she was she could not discover them. The crest that they were attempting lay in another direction hidden by a nearer spur. She was in the very heart of the mountains; peaks and ridges rose all about her, so much so that the general direction of the great range was lost. She was at the center of a far flung concavity of

crest and range. She marked one towering point to the right of her that rose massively grand above all the others. To-morrow she would climb to that high point and from its lofty elevation look upon the heavens above and the earth beneath, aye and the waters under the earth far below. To-morrow! — it is generally known that we do not usually attempt the high points in life's range at once, content are we with lower altitudes to-day.

There was no sound above her, the rushing water over the rocks upon the nearer side she could hear faintly beneath her, there was no wind about her, to stir the long needles of the pines. It was very still, the kind of a stillness of body which is the outward and visible complement of that stillness of the soul in which men know God. There had been no earthquake, no storm, the mountains had not heaved beneath her feet, the great and strong wind had not passed by, the rocks had not been rent and broken, yet Enid caught herself listening as if for a Voice. The thrall of majesty, silence, loneliness was upon her. She stood — one stands when there is a chance of meeting God on the way, one does not kneel until He comes — with her raised hands clasped, her head uplifted in exultation unspeakable, God-conquered with her face to heaven upturned.

"I will lift up mine eyes to the hills whence cometh my salvation," her heart sang voicelessly. "We praise Thee, O God, we magnify Thy Holy Name forever," floated through her brain, in great appreciation of the marvelous works of the Almighty Shaping Master Hand. Caught up as it were into the heavens, her soul leaped to meet its maker. Thinking to find God she waited there on the heaven-kissing hill.

How long she stayed she did not realize; she took no note of time, it did not occur to her even to look at the watch on her wrist; she had swept the skyline cut off as it were by the peaks when first she came, and when at last she turned away — even divinest moments must have an end — she looked not backward. She saw not a little cloud hid on the horizon behind the rampart of ages, as it were, no bigger than a man's hand, a cloud full of portent and which would alarm greatly the veteran Kirkby in the camp and Maitland on the mountain top. Both of them unfortunately were unable to see it, one being on the other side of the range, and the other deep in the cañon, and for both of them as for the girl the sun still shone brightly.

The declivity to the river on the upper side was comparatively easy and Enid Maitland went slowly and thoughtfully down to it until she

reached the young torrent. She got her tackle ready, but did no casting as she made her way slowly up the ever narrowing, ever rising cañon. She was charmed and thrilled by the wild beauty of the way, the spell of the mountains was deep upon her. Thoughtfully she wandered on until presently she came to another little amphitheater like that where the camp was pitched, only smaller. Strange to say the brook, or river, here broadened into a little pool perhaps twenty feet across; a turn had thrown a full force of water against the huge boulder wall and in ages of effort a giant cup had been hollowed out of the native rock. The pool was perhaps four or five feet deep, the rocky bottom worn smooth, the clearing was upon the opposite side and the banks were heavily wooded beyond the spur of the rock which formed the back of the pool. She could see the trout in it. She made ready to try her fortune, but before she did so an idea came to her — daring, unconventional, extraordinary, begot of innocence and inexperience.

The water of course was very cold, but she had been accustomed all her life to taking a bath at the natural temperature of the water at whatever season. She knew that the only people in that wilderness were the members of her own party; three of them were at the camp below, the

others were ascending a mountain miles away. The cañon was deep sunk, and she satisfied herself by careful observation that the pool was not overlooked by any elevations far or near.

Her ablutions in common with those of the rest of the campers had been by piecemeal of necessity. Here was an opportunity for a plunge in a natural bath tub. She was as certain that she would be under no observation as if she were in the privacy of her own chamber. Here again impulse determined the end. In spite of her assurance there was some little apprehension in the glance that she cast about her, but it soon vanished. There was no one. She was absolutely alone. The pool and the chance of the plunge had brought her down to earth again; the thought of the enlivening exhilaration of the pure cold water dashing against her own sweet warm young body changed the current of her thoughts — the anticipation of it rather.

Impulsively she dropped her rod upon the grass, unpinned her cap, threw the fishing basket from her shoulder. She was wearing a stout sweater; that too joined the rest. Nervous hands manipulated buttons and the fastenings. In a few moments the sweet figure of youth, of beauty, of purity and of innocence brightened the sod and shed a white luster upon the green of the

grass and moss and pines, reflecting light to the gray brown rocks of the range. So Eve may have looked on some bright Eden morning. A few steps forward and this nymph of the woods, this naiad of the mountains, plunged into the clear, cold waters of the pool — a water sprite and her fountain!

CHAPTER VII

THE BEAR, THE MAN AND THE FLOOD

THE water was deep enough to receive her dive and the pool was long enough to enable her to swim a few strokes. The first chill of the icy water was soon lost in the vigorous motions in which she indulged, but no mere human form however hardened and inured could long endure that frigid bath. Reluctantly, yet with the knowledge that she must go, after one more sweeping dive and a few magnificent strokes, she raised her head from the water lapping her white shoulders, and shaking her face clear from the drops of crystal, faced the shore. It was no longer untenanted, she was no longer alone.

What she saw startled and alarmed her beyond measure. Planted on her clothes, looking straight at her, having come upon her in absolute silence, nothing having given her the least warning of his approach, and now gazing at her with red, hungry, evil, vicious eyes, the eyes of the covetous filled with the cruel lust of desire and carnal possession, and yet with a glint of surprise in them, too, as if he did not know quite

what to make of the white loveliness of this unwonted apparition flashing so suddenly at him out of the water, this strange invader of the domain of which he fancied he was sole master and lord paramount, stood a great, monstrous frightful looking Grizzly Bear. *Ursus Horribilis,* indeed.

He was an aged monarch of the mountains, reddish brown in color originally, but now a hoary dirty gray. His body was massive and burly, his legs short, dark colored and immensely powerful. His broad square head moved restlessly. His fanged mouth opened and a low hoarse growl came from the red cavern of his throat. He was an old and terrible monster who had tasted the blood of man and who would not hesitate to attack even without provocation especially anything at once so harmless and so whitely inviting as the girl in the pool.

The girl forgot the chill of the water in the horror of that moment. Alone, naked, defenseless, lost in the mountains, with the most powerful, sanguinary and ferocious beast of the continent in front of her, she could neither fight nor fly, she could only wait his pleasure. He snuffed at her clothing a moment and stood with one fore foot advanced for a second or two growling deeply, evidently, she thought with almost super-

human keenness of perception, preparing to leap into the pool and seize upon her.

The rush of the current as it swirled about her caused her to sway gently, otherwise she stood motionless and apprehensive, terribly expectant. She had made no sound, and save for that low growl the great beast had been equally silent. There was an awful fixity in the gaze she turned upon him and he wavered under it. It annoyed him. It bespoke a little of the dominance of the human. But she was too surprised, too unnerved, too desperately frightened to put forth the full power of mind over matter. There was piteous appeal in her gaze. The bear realized this and mastered her sufficiently.

She did not know whether she was in the water or in the air, there were but two points upon which her consciousness was focussed in the vast ellipse of her imagination. Another moment or two and all coherency of thought would be gone. The grizzly, still unsettled and uneasy before her awful glance, but not deterred by it, turned its great head sideways a little to escape the direct immobile stare, brought his sharp clawed foot down heavily and lurched forward.

Scarcely had a minute elapsed in which all this happened. That huge threatening heave of the great body toward her relieved the tension. She

found voice at last. Although it was absolutely futile she realized as she cried, her released lips framed the loud appeal.

"Help! for God's sake."

Although she knew she cried but to the bleak walls of the cañon, the drooping pines, the rushing river, the distant heaven, the appeal went forth accompanied by the mightiest conjuration known to man.

"For God's sake, Help!"

How dare poor humanity so plead, the doubter cries. What is it to God if one suffers, another bleeds, another dies. What answer could come out of that silent sky?

Sometimes the Lord speaks with the loud voice of men's fashioning, instead of in that still whisper which is His own and the sound of which we fail to catch because of our own ignoble babble!

The answer to her prayer came with a roar in her nervous frightened ear like a clap of thunder. Ere the first echo of it died away, it was succeeded by another and another and another, echoing, rolling, reverberating among the rocks in ever diminishing but long drawn out peals.

On the instant the bear rose to his feet, swayed slightly and struck as at an imaginary enemy with his weighty paws. A hoarse, frightful guttering roar burst from his red slavering jaws, then he

lurched sideways and fell forward, fighting the air madly for a moment, and lay still.

With staring eyes that missed no detail, she saw that the brute had been shot in the head and shoulder three times, and that he was apparently dead. The revulsion that came over her was bewildering; she swayed again, this time not from the thrust of the water but with sick faintness. The tension suddenly taken off, unstrung, the loose bow of her spirit quivered helplessly; the arrow of her life almost fell into the stream.

And then a new and more appalling terror swept over her. Some man had fired that shot. Actæon had spied upon Diana. With this sudden revelation of her shame, the red blood beat to the white surface in spite of the chill water. The anguish of that moment was greater than before. She could be killed, torn to pieces, devoured, that was a small thing, but that she should be so outraged in her modesty was unendurable. She wished the hunter had not come. She sunk lower in the water for a moment fain to hide in its crystal clarity and realized as she did how frightfully cold she was. Yet, although she froze where she was and perished with cold she could not go out on the bank to dress, and it would avail her little she saw swiftly, since the

huge monster had fallen a dead heap on her clothes.

Now all this, although it takes minutes to tell, had happened in but a few seconds. Seconds sometimes include hours, even a life time, in their brief composition. She thought it would be just as well for her to sink down and die in the water, when a sudden splashing below her caused her to look down the stream.

She was so agitated that she could make out little except that there was a man crossing below her and making directly toward the body of the bear. He was a tall black bearded man, she saw he carried a rifle, he looked neither to the right nor to the left, he did not bestow a glance upon her. She could have cried aloud in thanksgiving for his apparent obliviousness to her as she crouched now neck deep in the benumbing cold. The man stepped on the bank, shook himself like a great dog might have done and marched over to the bear. He uprooted a small near-by pine, with the ease of a Hercules — and she had time to mark and marvel at it in spite of everything — and then with that as a lever he unconcernedly and easily heaved the body of the monster from off her clothing. She was to learn later what a feat of strength it was to move

that inert carcass weighing much more than half a ton.

Thereafter he dropped the pine tree by the side of the dead grizzly and without a backward look tramped swiftly and steadily up the cañon through the trees, turning at the point of it, and was instantly lost to sight. His gentle and generous purpose was obvious even to the frightened, agitated, excited girl.

The woman watched him until he disappeared, a few seconds longer, and then she hurled herself through the water and stepped out upon the shore. Her sweater, which the bear had dragged forward in its advance, lay on top of the rest of her clothes covered with blood. She threw it aside and with nervous, frantic energy, wet, cold, though she was, she jerked on in some fashion enough clothes to cover her nakedness and then with more leisurely order and with necessary care she got the rest of her apparel in its accustomed place upon her body, and then when it was all over she sank down prone and prostrate upon the grass by the carcass of the now harmless monster which had so nearly caused her undoing, and shivered, cried and sobbed as if her heart would break.

She was chilled to the bone by her motionless sojourn, albeit it had been for scarcely more than

a minute, in that icy water, and yet the blood rushed to her brow and face, to every hidden part of her in waves as she thought of it. It was a good thing that she cried, she was not a weeping woman, her tears came slowly as a rule and then came hard. She rather prided herself upon her stoicism, but in this instance the great deeps of her nature had been undermined and the fountains thereof were fain to break forth.

How long she lay there, warmth coming gradually to her under the direct rays of the sun, she did not know, and it was a strange thing that caused her to arise. It grew suddenly dark over her head. She looked up and a rim of frightful, black, dense clouds had suddenly blotted out the sun. The clouds were lined with gold and silver and the long rays shot from behind the somber blind over the yet uncovered portions of the heaven, but the clouds moved with the irresistible swiftness and steadiness of a great deluge. The wall of them lowered above her head while they extended steadily and rapidly across the sky toward the other side of the cañon and the mountain wall.

A storm was brewing such as she had never seen, such as she had no experience to enable her to realize its malign possibilities. Nay, it was now at hand. She had no clew, however, of what

was toward, how terrible a danger overshadowed her. Frightened but unconscious of all the menace of the hour her thoughts flew down the cañon to the camp. She must hasten there. She looked for her watch which she had picked from the grass and which she had not yet put on; the grizzly had stepped upon it, it was irretrievably ruined. She judged from her last glimpse of the sun that it must now be early afternoon. She rose to her feet and staggered with weakness, she had eaten nothing since morning, and the nervous shock and strain through which she had gone had reduced her to a pitiable condition.

Her luncheon had fortunately escaped unharmed. In a big pocket of her short skirt there was a small flask of whiskey, which her Uncle Robert had required her to take with her. She felt sick and faint, but she knew that she must eat if she was to make the journey, difficult as it might prove, back to the camp. She forced herself to take the first mouthful of bread and meat she had brought with her, but when she had tasted she needed no further incentive, she ate to the last crumb; she thought this was the time she needed stimulants too, and mingling the cold water from the brook with a little of the ardent spirit from the flask she drank. Some of the chill had worn off, some of the fatigue had gone.

She rose to her feet and started down the cañon; her bloody sweater still lay on the ground with other things of which she was heedless. It had grown colder but she realized that the climb down the cañon would put her stagnant blood in circulation and all would be well.

Before she began the descent of the pass, she cast one long glance backward whither the man had gone. Whence came he, who was he, what had he seen, where was he now? She thanked God for his interference in one breath and hated him for his presence in the other.

The whole sky was now black with drifting clouds, lightning flashed above her head, muttered peals of thunder, terrifically ominous, rocked through the silent hills. The noise was low and subdued but almost continuous. With a singular and uneasy feeling that she was being observed, she started down the cañon, plunging desperately through the trees, leaping the brook from side to side where it narrowed, seeking ever the easiest way. She struggled on, panting with sudden inexplicable terror almost as bad as that which had overwhelmed her an hour before — and growing more intense every moment, to such a tragic pass had the day and its happenings brought her.

Poor girl, awful experience really was to be

hers that day. The Fates sported with her — bodily fear, outraged modesty, mental anguish and now the terror of the storm.

The clouds seemed to sink lower, until they almost closed about her. Long gray ghostly arms reached out toward her. It grew darker and darker in the depths of the cañon. She screamed aloud — in vain.

Suddenly the rolling thunder peals concentrated, balls of fire leaped out of the heavens and struck the mountains where she could actually see them. There are not words to describe the tremendous crashings which seemed to splinter the hills, to be succeeded by brief periods of silence, to be followed by louder and more terrific detonations.

In one of those appalling alternations from sound to silence she heard a human cry — an answering cry to her own! It came from the hills behind her. It must proceed, she thought, from the man. She could not meet that man; although she craved human companionship as never before, she did not want his. She could not bear it. Better the wrath of God, the fury of the tempest.

Heedless of the sharp note of warning, of appeal, in the voice ere it was drowned by another roll of thunder, she plunged on in the darkness. The cañon narrowed here, she made her way down the ledges, leaping recklessly from rock to

rock, slipping, falling, grazing now one side, now the other, hurling herself forward with white face and bruised body and torn hands and throbbing heart that would fain burst its bonds. There was once an ancient legend of a human creature, menaced by all the furies, pitilessly pursued by every malefic spirit of earth and air; like him this sweet young girl, innocent, lovely, erstwhile happy, fled before the storm.

And then the heavens opened, the fountains of the great deeps were broken down, and with absolute literalness the floods descended. The bursting clouds, torn asunder by the wild winds, riven by the pent up lightning within their black and turgid breasts, disburdened themselves. The water came down, as it did of old when God washed the face of the world, in a flood. The narrow of the cañon was filled ten, twenty, thirty feet in a moment by the cloud burst. The black water rolled and foamed, surging like the rapids at Niagara.

The body of the girl, utterly unprepared, was caught up in a moment and flung like a bolt from a catapult down the seething sea filled with the trunks of the trees and the débris of the mountains, tossing almost humanly in the wild confusion. She struck out strongly, swimming more because of the instinct of life than for any other

reason. A helpless atom in the boiling flood. Growing every minute greater and greater as the angry skies disgorged themselves of their pent up torrents upon her devoted head.

CHAPTER VIII

DEATH, LIFE AND THE RESURRECTION

THE man was coming back from one of his rare visits to the settlements. Ahead of him he drove a train of burros who, well broken to their work, followed with docility the wise old leader in the advance. The burros were laden with his supplies for the approaching winter. The season was late, the mountains would soon be impassable on account of the snow, indeed he chose the late season always for his buying in order that he might not be followed and it was his habit to buy in different places in different years that his repeated and expected presence at one spot might not arouse suspicion.

Intercourse with his fellow men was limited to this yearly visit to a settlement and even that was of the briefest nature, confined always to the business in hand. Even when busy in the town he pitched a small tent in the open on the outskirts and dwelt apart. No men there in those days pried into the business of other men too closely. Curiosity was neither safe nor necessary. If he aroused transient interest or specu-

lation it soon died away. He vanished into the mountains and as he came no more to that place, he was soon forgotten.

Withdrawing from his fellow men and avoiding their society, this man was never so satisfied as when alone in the silent hills. His heart and spirit rose with every step he made away from the main traveled roads or the more difficult mountain trails.

For several days he journeyed through the mountains, choosing the wildest and most inaccessible parts for his going. Amid the cañons and peaks he threaded his way with unerring accuracy, ascending higher and higher until at last he reached the mountain aerie, the lonely hermitage, where he made his home. There he reveled in his isolation. What had been punishment, expiation, had at last become pleasure.

Civilization was bursting through the hills in every direction, railways were being pushed hither and thither, the precious metals were being discovered at various places and after them came hoards of men and with them — God save the mark — women; but his section of the country had hitherto been unvisited even by hunters, explorers, miners or pleasure seekers. He was glad, he had grown to love the spot where he had

made his home, and he had no wish to be forced, like little Joe, to move on.

Once a man who loved the strife, noble or ignoble, of the madding crowd, he had grown accustomed to silence, habituated to solitude. Winter and summer alike he roamed the mountains, delving into every forest, exploring every hidden cañon, surmounting every inaccessible peak; no storm, no snow, no condition of wind or weather daunted him or stopped him. He had no human companionship by which to try his mettle, but nevertheless over the world of the material which lay about him he was a master as he was a man.

He found some occupation, too, in the following of old Adam's inheritance, during the pleasant months of summer he made such garden as he could. His profession of mining engineer gave him other employment. Round about him lay treasures inestimable, precious metals abounded in the hills. He had located them, tested, analyzed, estimated the wealth that was his for the taking — it was as valueless to him as the doubloons and golden guineas were to Selkirk on his island. Yet the knowledge that it was there gave him an energizing sense of potential power, unconsciously enormously flattering to his self esteem.

Sometimes he wandered to the extreme verge of the range and on clear days saw far beneath him the smoke of great cities of the plains. He could be a master among men as he was a master among mountains, if he chose. On such occasions he laughed cynically, scornfully, yet rarely did he ever give way to such emotion.

A great and terrible sorrow was upon him; cherishing a great passion he had withdrawn himself from the common lot to dwell upon it. From a perverted sense of expiation, in a madness of grief, horror and despair, he had made himself a prisoner to his ideas in the desert of the mountains. Back to his cabin he would hasten, and there surrounded by his living memories — deathless yet of the dead! — he would recreate the past until dejection drove him abroad on the hills to meet God if not man — or woman. Night - day, sunshine - shadow, heat - cold, storm - calm; these were his life.

Having disburdened his faithful animals of their packs and having seen them safely bestowed for the winter in the corral he had built near the base of the cliff upon which his rude home was situated, he took his rifle one morning for one of those lonely walks across the mountains from which he drew such comfort because he fancied the absence of man conduced to the nearness of

God. It was a delusion as old nearly as the Christian religion. Many had made themselves hermits in the past in remorse for sin and for love toward God; this man had buried himself in the wilderness in part for the first of these causes, in other part for the love of woman. In these days of swift and sudden change he had been constant to a remembrance and abiding in his determination for five swift moving years. The world for him had stopped its progress in one brief moment five years back — the rest was silence. What had happened since then out yonder where people were mated he did not know and he did not greatly care.

In his visits to the settlements he asked no questions, he bought no papers, he manifested no interest in the world; something in him had died in one fell moment, and there had been, as yet, no resurrection. Yet life, and hope, and ambition do not die, they are indeed eternal. *Resurgam!*

Life with its tremendous activities, its awful anxieties, its wearing strains, its rare triumphs, its opportunities for achievement, for service; hope with its illuminations, its encouragements, its expectations; ambition with its stimulus, its force, its power; and greatest of all love, itself alone — all three were latent in him. In touch with a woman these had gone. Something as

powerful and as human must bring them back.

It was against nature that a man dowered as he should so live to himself alone. Some voice should cry to his soul in its cerements of futile remorse, vain expiations and benumbing recollection; some day he should burst these grave clothes self-wound about him and be once more a man and a master among men, rather than the hermit and the recluse of the solitudes.

He did not allow these thoughts to come into his life, indeed it is quite likely that he scarcely realized them at all yet; such possibilities did not present themselves to him; perhaps the man was a little mad that morning, maybe he trembled on the verge of a break — upward, downward I know not so it be away — unconsciously as he strode along the range.

He had been walking for some hours, and as he grew thirsty it occurred to him to descend to the level of the brook which he heard below him and of which he sometimes caught a flashing glimpse through the trees. He scrambled down the rocks and found himself in a thick grove of pine. Making his way slowly and with great difficulty through the tangle of fallen timber which lay in every direction, the sound of a human voice, the last thing on earth to be expected in that wilderness, smote upon the fearful hollow of his ear.

Any voice or any word then and there would have surprised him, but there was a note of awful terror in this voice, a sound of frightened appeal. The desperation in the cry left him no moment for thought, the demand was for action. The cry was not addressed to him, apparently, but to God, yet it was he who answered — sent doubtless by that Over-looking Power who works in such mysterious ways His wonders to perform!

He leaped over the intervening trees to the edge of the forest where the rapid waters ran. To the right of him rose a huge rock, or cliff, in front of him the cañon bent sharply to the north, and beneath him a few rods away a speck of white gleamed above the water of a deep and still pool that he knew.

There was a woman there!

He had time for but the swiftest glance, he had surmised that the voice was not that of a man's voice instantly he heard it, and now he was sure. She stood white breast deep in the water staring ahead of her. The next instant he saw what had alarmed her — a Grizzly Bear, the largest, fiercest, most forbidding specimen he had ever seen. There were a few of those monsters still left in the range, he himself had killed several.

The woman had not seen him. He was a silent man by long habit; accustomed to saying

nothing, he said nothing now. But instantly aiming from the hip with a wondrous skill and a perfect mastery of the weapon, and indeed it was a short range for so huge a target, he pumped bullet after bullet from his heavy Winchester into the evil monarch of the mountains. The first shot did for him, but making assurance doubly and trebly sure, he fired again and again. Satisfied at last that the bear was dead, and observing that he had fallen upon the clothes of the bather, he turned, descended the stream for a few yards until he came to a place where it was easily fordable, stepped through it without a glance toward the woman shivering in the water, whose sensation, so far as a mere man could, he thoroughly understood and appreciated, and whose modesty he fain would spare, having not forgotten to be a gentleman in five years of his own society — high test of quality, that.

He climbed out upon the bank, uprooted a small tree, rolled the bear clear of the heap of woman's clothing and marched straight ahead of him up the cañon and around the bend.

Thereafter, being a man, he did not faint or fall, but completely unnerved he leaned against the cañon wall, dropped his gun at his feet and stood there trembling mightily, sweat bedewing his forehead, and the sweat had not come from

his exertions. In one moment the whole even tenor of his life was changed. The one glimpse he had got of those white shoulders, that pallid face, that golden head raised from the water had swept him back five years. He had seen once more in the solitude a woman.

Other women he had seen at a distance and avoided in his yearly visits to the settlements of course; these had passed him by remotely, but here he was brought in touch intimately with humanity. He who had taken life had saved it. A woman had sent him forth, was a woman to call him back?

He cursed himself for his weakness. He shut his eyes and summoned other memories. How long he stood there he could not have told; he was fighting a battle and it seemed to him at last that he triumphed. Presently the consciousness came to him that perhaps he had no right to stand there idle, it might be that the woman needed him, perhaps she had fainted in the water, perhaps — He turned toward the bend which concealed him from her and then he stopped. Had he any right to intrude upon her privacy? He must of necessity be an unwelcome visitor to her, he had surprised her at a frightful disadvantage; he knew instinctively, although the fault was none of his, although he had saved her life thereby,

that she would hold him and him alone responsible for the outrage to her modesty, and although he had seen little at first glance and had resolutely kept his eyes away, the mere consciousness of her absolute helplessness appealed to him — to what was best and noblest in him, too. He must go to her. Stay, she might not yet be clothed, in which event — But no, she must be dressed, or dead, by this time and in either case he would have a duty to discharge.

It devolved upon him to make sure of her safety, he was in a certain sense responsible for it, until she got back to her friends wherever they might be; but he persuaded himself that otherwise he did not want to see her again, that he did not wish to know anything about her future; that he did not care whether it was well or ill with her; and it was only stern obligation which drove him toward her — oh fond and foolish man!

He compromised with himself at last by climbing the ridge that had shut off a view of the pool, and looking down at the place so memorable to him. He was prepared to withdraw instantly should circumstances warrant, and he was careful so to conceal himself as to give no possible opportunity for her to discover his scrutiny.

With a beating heart and eager eyes he searched the spot. There lay the bear and a little distance

away prone on the grass, clothed but whether in her right mind or not he could not tell, lay the woman. For a moment, as he bent a concentrated eager gaze upon her, he thought she might have fainted or that she might have died. In any event he reflected that she had strength and nerve and will to have dressed herself before either of these things had happened. She lay motionless under his gaze for so long that he finally made up his mind that common humanity required him to go to her assistance.

He rose to his feet on the instant and saw the woman also lift herself from the grass as if moved by a similar impulse. In his intense preoccupation he had failed to observe the signs of the times. A sense of the overcast sky came to him suddenly, as it did to her, but with a difference. He knew what was about to happen, his experience told him much more as to the awful potentialities of the tempest than she could possibly imagine. She must be warned at once, she must leave the cañon and get up on the higher ground without delay. His duty was plain and yet he did it not. He could not. The pressure upon him was not yet strong enough.

A half dozen times as he watched her deliberately sitting there eating, he opened his mouth to cry to her, yet he could not bring himself to

it. A strange timidity oppressed him, halted him, held him back. A man cannot stay away five years from men and woman and be himself with them in the twinkling of an eye. And when to that instinctive and acquired reluctance against which he struggled in vain, he added the assurance that whatever his message he would be unwelcome on account of what had gone before, he could not force himself to go to her or even to call to her, not yet. He would keep her under surveillance, however, and if the worst came he could intervene in time to rescue her. He counted without his cost, his usual judgment bewildered. So he followed her through the trees and down the bank.

Now he was so engrossed in her and so agitated that his caution slept, his experience was forgotten. The storm in his own breast was so great that it overshadowed the storm brewing above. Her way was easier than his and he had fallen some distance behind when suddenly there rushed upon him the fact that a frightful and unlooked for cloudburst was about to occur above their heads. A lightning flash and a thunder clap at last arrested his attention. Then, but not until then, he flung everything to the winds and amid the sudden and almost continuous peals of thunder he sent cry after cry toward her which were

lost in the tremendous diapason of sound that echoed and re-echoed through the rifts of the mountains.

"Wait," he cried again and again. "Come up higher. Get out of the cañon. You'll be drowned."

But he had waited too long, the storm had developed too rapidly, she was too far ahead of and beneath him. She heard nothing but the sound of a voice, shrill, menacing, fraught with terror for her, not a word distinguishable; scarcely to her disturbed soul even a human voice, it seemed like the wierd cry of some wild spirit of the storm. It sounded to her overwrought nerves so utterly inhuman that she only ran the faster.

The cañon swerved and then doubled back, but he knew its direction; losing sight of her for the moment he plunged straight ahead through the trees, cutting off the bend, leaping with superhuman agility and strength over rocks and logs until he reached a point where the rift narrowed between two walls and ran deeply. There and then the heavens opened and the floods came and beat into that open maw of that vast crevasse and filled it full in an instant.

As the deluge came roaring down, bearing onward the sweepings and scourings of the moun-

tains, he caught a glimpse of her white desperate face rising, falling, now disappearing, now coming into view again, in the foamy midst of the torrent. He ran to the cliff bank and throwing aside his gun he scrambled down the wall to a certain shelf of the rock over which the rising water broke thinly. Ordinarily it was twenty feet above the creek bed. Bracing himself against a jagged projection he waited, praying. The cañon was here so narrow that he could have leaped to the other side and yet it was too wide for him to reach her if the water did not sweep her toward his feet. It was all done in a second — fortunately a projection on the other side threw the force of the torrent toward him and with it came the woman.

She was almost spent; she had been struck by a log upheaved by some mighty wave, her hands were moving feebly, her eyes were closed, she was drowning, dying, but indomitably battling on. He stooped down and as a surge lifted her he threw his arm around her waist and then braced himself against the rock to sustain the full thrust of the mighty flood. As he seized her she gave way suddenly, as if after having done all that she could there was now nothing left but to trust herself to his hand and God's. She hung a dead

weight on his arm in the ravening water which dragged and tore at her madly.

He was a man of giant strength, but the struggle bade fair to be too much even for him. It seemed as if the mountain behind him was giving way. He set his teeth, he tried desperately to hold on, he thrust out his right hand, holding her with the other one, and clawed at the dripping rock in vain. In a moment the torrent mastered him and when it did so it seized him with fury and threw him like a stone from a sling into the seething vortex of the mid-stream. But in all this he did not, he would not, release her.

Such was the swiftness of the motion with which they were swept downward that he had little need to swim; his only effort was to keep his head above water and to keep from being dashed against the logs that tumbled end over end, or whirled sideways, or were jammed into clusters only to burst out on every hand. He struggled furiously to keep himself from being overwhelmed in the seething madness, and what was harder, to keep the lifeless woman in his arms from being stricken or wrenched away. He knew that below the narrows where the cañon widened the water would subside, the awful fury of the rain would presently cease. If he could steer clear

of the rocks in the broad he might win to land with her.

The chances against him were thousands to nothing. But what are chances in the eyes of God. The man in his solitude had not forgotten to pray, his habits stood him in good stead now. He petitioned shortly, brokenly, in brief unspoken words, as he battled through the long dragging seconds.

Fighting, clinging, struggling, praying, he was swept on. Heavier and heavier the woman dragged in an unconscious heap. It would have been easier for him if he had let her go; she would never know and he could then escape. The idea never once occurred to him. He had indeed withdrawn from his kind, but when one depended upon him all the old appeal of weak humanity awoke quick response in the bosom of the strong. He would die with the stranger rather than yield her to the torrent or admit himself beaten and give up the fight. So the conscious and the unconscious struggled through the narrow of the cañon.

Presently with the rush and hurl of a bullet from the mouth of a gun, they found themselves in a shallow lake through which the waters still rushed mightily, breaking over rocks, digging away shallow rooted trees, leaping, biting, snarl-

ing, tearing at the big walls spread away on either side. He had husbanded some of his strength for this final effort, this last chance of escape. Below them at the other end of this open the walls came together again; there the descent was sharper than before and the water ran to the opening with racing speed. Once again in the torrent and they would be swept to death in spite of all.

Shifting his grasp to the woman's hair, now unbound, he held her with one hand and swam hard with the other. The current still ran swiftly, but with no gigantic upheaving waves as before. It was more easy to avoid floating timber and débris, and on one side where the ground sloped somewhat gently the quick water flowed more slowly. He struck out desperately for it, forcing himself away from the main stream into the shallows and ever dragging the woman. Was it hours or minutes or seconds after that he gained the battle and neared the shore at the lowest edge?

He caught with his forearm, as the torrent swerved him around, a stout young pine so deeply rooted as yet to have withstood the flood. Summoning that last reserve of strength that is bestowed upon us in our hour of need, and comes unless from God we know not whence, he drew

himself in front of the pine, got his back against it, and although the water thundered against him still — only by comparison could it be called quieter — and his foothold was most precarious, he reached down carefully and grasped the woman under the shoulders. His position was a cramped one, but by the power of his arms alone he lifted her up until he got his left arm about her waist again. It was a mighty feat of strength indeed.

The pine stood in the midst of the water, for even on the farther side the earth was overflowed but the water was stiller; he did not know what might be there, but he had to chance it. Lifting her up he stepped out, fortunately meeting firm ground; a few paces and he reached solid rock above the flood. He raised her above his head and laid her upon the shore, then with the very last atom of all his force, physical, mental and spiritual, he drew himself up and fell panting and utterly exhausted but triumphant by her side.

The cloud burst was over, but the rain still beat down upon them, the thunder still roared above them, the lightning still flashed about them, but they were safe, alive if the woman had not died in his arms. He had done a thing superhuman — no man knowing conditions would have believed it. He himself would have declared a thousand times its patent impossibility.

For a few seconds he strove to recover himself; then he thought of the flask he always carried in his pocket. It was gone; his clothes were ragged and torn, they had been ruined by his battle with the waves. The girl lay where he had placed her on her back. In the pocket of her hunting skirt he noticed a little protuberance; the pocket was provided with a flap and tightly buttoned. Without hesitation he unbuttoned it. There was a flask there, a little silver mounted affair; by some miracle it had not been broken. It was half full. With nervous hands he opened it and poured some of its contents down her throat; then he bent over her his soul in his glance, scarcely knowing what to do next. Presently she opened her eyes.

And there, in the rain, by that raging torrent whence he had drawn her as it were from the jaws of death by the power of his arm, in the presence of the God above them, this man and this woman looked at each other and life for both of them was no longer the same.

BOOK III

FORGETTING AND FORGOT

CHAPTER IX

A WILD DASH FOR THE HILLS

Old Kirkby, who had been lazily mending a saddle the greater part of the morning, had eaten his dinner, smoked his pipe and was now stretched out on the grass in the warm sun taking a nap. Mrs. Maitland was drowsing over a book in the shadow of one of the big pines, when Pete, the horse wrangler, who had been wandering rather far down the cañon rounding up the ever straying stock, suddenly came bursting into the camp.

"Heavens!" he cried, actually kicking the prostrate frontiersman as he almost stumbled over him. "Wake up, old man, an' —"

"What the —" began Kirkby fiercely, thus rudely aroused from slumber and resentful of the daring and most unusual affront to his dignity and station, since all men, and especially the younger ones, held him in great honor.

"Look there!" yelled Pete in growing excitement and entirely oblivious to his *lèse-majesté*, pointing at a black cloud rolling over the top of the range. "It'll be a cloud burst sure, we'll

have to git out o' here an' in a hurry too. Oh, Mrs. Maitland."

By this time Kirkby was on his feet. The storm had stolen upon him sleeping and unaware, the configuration of the cañon having completely hid its approach. At best the three in the camp could not have discovered it until it was high in the heavens. Now the clouds were already approaching the noonday sun. Kirkby was alive to the situation at once; he had the rare ability of men of action, of awakening with all his faculties at instant command; he did not have to rub his eyes and wonder where he was, and speculate as to what was to be done. The moment that his eyes, following Pete's outstretched arm, discovered the black mass of clouds, he ran toward Mrs. Maitland, and standing on no ceremony he shook her vigorously by the shoulder.

"We'll have to run for our lives, ma'm," he said briefly. "Pete, drive the stock up on the hills, fur as you kin, the hosses pertikler, they'll be more to us an' them burros must take keer of themselves."

Pete needed no urging, he was off like a shot in the direction of the improvised corral. He loosed the horses from their pickets and started them up the steep trail that led down from the hogback to the camp by the water's edge. He

also tried to start the burros he had just rounded up in the same direction. Some of them would go and some of them would not. He had his hands full in an instant. Meanwhile Kirkby did not linger by the side of Mrs. Maitland; with incredible agility for so old a man he ran over to the tent where the stores were kept and began picking out such articles of provision as he could easiest carry.

"Come over here, Mrs. Maitland," he cried. "We'll have to carry up on the hill somethin' to keep us from starvin' till we git back to town. We hadn't orter camped in this yere pocket noways, but who'd ever expected anything like this now."

"What do you fear?" asked the woman, joining him as she spoke and waiting for his directions.

"Looks to me like a cloud bust," was the answer. "Creek's pretty full now, an' if she does break everything below yere'll go to hell on a run."

It was evidence of his perturbation and anxiety that he used such language which, however, in the emergency did not seem unwarranted even to the refined ear of Mrs. Maitland.

"Is it possible?" she exclaimed.

"Taint only possible, it's sartin. Now ma'm,"

he hastily bundled up a lot of miscellaneous provisions in a small piece of canvas, tied it up and handed it to her, "that'll be for you." Immediately after he made up a much larger bundle in another tent fly, adding, "an' this is mine."

"Oh, let us hurry," cried Mrs. Maitland, as a peal of thunder, low, muttered, menacing, burst from the flying clouds now obscuring the sun, and rolled over the camp.

"We've got time enough yit," answered Kirkby coolly calculating their chances. "Best git your slicker on, you'll need it in a few minutes."

Mrs. Maitland ran to her own tent and soon came out with sou'wester and yellow oil skins completely covering her. Kirkby meantime had donned his own old battered soiled rain clothes and had grabbed up Pete's.

"I brought the children's coats along," said Mrs. Maitland, extending three others.

"Good," said Kirkby, "now we'll take our packs an' —"

"Do you think there is any danger to Robert?"

"He'll git nothin' worse 'n a wettin'," returned the old man confidently. "If we'd pitched the tents up on the hogback, that's all we'd a been in for."

"I have to leave the tents and all the things," said Mrs. Maitland.

"You can stay with them," answered Kirkby, dryly, "but if what I think 's goin' to happen comes off, you won't have no need of nothin' no more — Here she comes."

As he spoke there was a sudden swift downpour of rain, not in drops, but in a torrent. Catching up his own pack and motioning the woman to do likewise with her load, Kirkby caught her by the hand, and half led, half dragged her up the steep trail from the brook to the ridge which bordered the side of the cañon. The cañon was much wider here than further up and there was much more room and much more space for the water to spread. Yet, they had to hurry for their lives as it was. They had gone up scarcely a hundred feet when the disgorgement of the heavens took place. The water fell with such force, directness and continuousness that it almost beat them down. It ran over the trail down the side of the mountain in sheets like waterfalls. It required all the old man's skill and address to keep himself and his companion from losing their footing and falling down into the seething tumult below.

The tents went down in an instant. Where there had been a pleasant bit of meadow land was

now a muddy tossing lake of black water. Some of the horses and most of the burros which Pete had been unable to do anything with were engulfed in a moment. The two on the mountain side could see them swimming for dear life as they swept down the cañon. Pete himself, with a few of the animals, was already scrambling up to safety.

Speech was impossible between the noise of the falling rain and the incessant peals of thunder, but by persistent gesture old Kirkby urged the terrified trembling woman up the trail until they finally reached the top of the hogback, where under the poor shelter of the stunted pines they joined Pete with such of the horses as he had been able to drive up. Kirkby taking a thought for the morrow, noted that there were four of them, enough to pull the wagon if they could get back to it.

After the first awful deluge of the cloud burst it moderated slightly, but the hard rain came down steadily, the wind rose as well and in spite of their oil skins they were soon wet and cold. It was impossible to make a fire, there was no place for them to go, nothing to be done, they could only remain where they were and wait. After a half hour of exposure to the merciless

fury of the storm, a thought came suddenly to Mrs. Maitland; she leaned over and caught the frontiersman by his wet sleeve. Seeing that she wished to speak to him he bent his head toward her lips.

"Enid," she cried, pointing down the cañon; she had not thought before of the position of the girl.

Kirkby, who had not forgotten her, but who had instantly realized that he could do nothing for her, shook his head, lifted his eyes and solemnly pointed his finger up to the gray skies. He had said nothing to Mrs. Maitland before, what was the use of troubling her.

"God only kin help her," he cried; "she's beyond the help of man."

Ah, indeed, old trapper, whence came the confident assurance of that dogmatic statement? For as it chanced at that very moment the woman for whose peril your heart was wrung was being lifted out of the torrent by a man's hand! And, yet, who shall say that the old hunter was not right, and that the man himself, as men of old have been, was sent from God?

"It can't be," began Mrs. Maitland in great anguish for the girl she had grown to love.

"Ef she seed the storm an' realized what it

was, an' had sense enough to climb up the cañon wall," answered the other, "she won't be no worse off 'n we are; ef not — "

Mrs. Maitland had only to look down into the seething caldron to understand the possibility of that "if."

"Oh," she cried, "let us pray for her that she sought the hills."

"I've been a doin' it," said the old man gruffly.

He had a deep vein of piety in him, but like other rich ores it had to be mined for in the depths before it was apparent.

By slow degrees the water subsided, and after a long while the rain ceased, a heavy mist lay on the mountains and the night approached without any further appearance of the veiled sun. Toward evening Robert Maitland with the three men and the three children joined the wretched trio above the camp. Maitland, wild with excitement and apprehension, had pressed on ahead of the rest. It was a glad faced man indeed who ran the last few steps of the rough way and clasped his wife in his arms, but as he did so he noticed that one was missing.

"Where is Enid?" he cried, releasing his wife.

"She went down the cañon early this mornin' intendin' to stay all day," slowly and reluctantly answered old Kirkby, "an' — "

He paused there, it wasn't necessary for him to say anything more.

Maitland walked to the edge of the trail and looked down into the valley. It had been swept clean of the camp. Rocks had been rolled over upon the meadow land, trunks of trees torn up by the roots had lodged against them, it was a scene of desolate and miserable confusion and disaster.

"Oh, Robert, don't you think she may be safe?" asked Mrs. Maitland.

"There's jest a chance, I think, that she may have suspicioned the storm an' got out of the cañon," suggested the old frontiersman.

"A slim chance," answered Maitland gloomily. "I wouldn't have had this happen for anything on earth."

"Nor me; I'd a heap ruther it had got me than her," said Kirkby simply.

"I didn't see it coming," continued Maitland nodding as if Kirkby's statement were to be accepted as a matter of course, as indeed it was. "We were on the other slope of the mountain, until it was almost over head."

"Nuther did I. To tell the truth I was lyin' down nappin' w'en Pete, yere, who'd been down the cañon rounding up some of the critters, came bustin' in on us."

"I ain't saved but four hosses," said Pete mournfully, "and there's only one burro on the hogback."

"We came back as fast as we could," said Maitland. "I pushed on ahead. George, Bradshaw and Phillips are bringing Bob and the girls. We must search the cañon."

"It can't be done to-night, old man," said Kirkby.

"I tell you we can't wait, Jack!"

"We've got to. I'm as willin' to lay down my life for that young gal as anybody on earth, but in this yere mist an' as black a night as it's goin' to be, we couldn't go ten rod without killin' ourselves an' we couldn't see nothin' noways."

"But she may be in the cañon."

"If she's in the cañon 'twon't make no difference to her w'ether we finds her to-morrer or next day or next year, Bob."

Maitland groaned in anguish.

"I can't stay here inactive," he persisted stubbornly.

"It's a hard thing, but we got to wait till mornin'. Ef she got out of the cañon and climbed up on the hogback she'll be all right; she'll soon find out she can't make no progress in this mist and darkness. No, old friend, we're up agin it hard; we jest got to stay the night w'ere

we are an' as long as we got to wait we might as well make ourselves as comfortable as possible. For the wimmen an' children anyway. I fetched up some ham and some canned goods and other eatin's in these yere canvas sacks, we might kindle a fire — "

"It's hardly possible," said Maitland, "we shall have to eat it cold."

"Oh, Robert," pleaded his wife, "isn't it possible that she may have escaped?"

"Possible, yes, but — "

"We won't give up hope, ma'am," said Kirkby, "until to-morrer w'en we've had a look at the cañon."

By this time the others joined the party. Phillips and Bradshaw showed the stuff that was in them; they immediately volunteered to go down the cañon at once, knowing little or nothing of its dangers and indifferent to what they did know, but as Kirkby had pointed out the attempt was clearly impossible. Maitland bitterly reproached himself for having allowed the girl to go alone, and in those self reproaches old Kirkby joined.

They were too wet and cold to sleep, there was no shelter and it was not until early in the morning they succeeded in kindling a fire. Meanwhile the men talked the situation over very carefully. They were two days' journey from the wagons.

It was necessary that the woman and children should be taken back at once. Kirkby hadn't been able to save much more than enough to eat to get them back to a ranch or settlement, and on very short rations at best. It was finally decided that George and Pete with Mrs. Maitland, the two girls and the youngster should go back to the wagon, drive to the nearest settlement, leave the women and then return on horseback with all speed to meet Maitland and Kirkby who would meanwhile search the cañon.

The two men from the east had to go back with the others although they pleaded gallantly to be allowed to remain with the two who were to take up the hunt for Enid. Maitland might have kept them with him, but that meant retaining a larger portion of the scanty supplies that had been saved, and he was compelled against his will to refuse their requests. Leaving barely enough to subsist Maitland and Kirkby for three or four days, or until the return of the relief party, the groups separated at daybreak.

"Oh, Robert," pleaded his wife, as he kissed her good-by, "take care of yourself, but find Enid."

"Yes," answered her husband, "I shall, never fear, but I must find the dear girl or discover what has become of her."

There was not time for further leave taking. A few hand clasps from man to man and then Robert Maitland standing in the midst of the group bowed his head in the sunny morning, for the sky again was clear, and poured out a brief prayer that God would prosper them, that they would find the child and that they would all be together again in health and happiness. And without another word, he and Kirkby plunged down the side of the cañon, the others taking up their weary march homeward with sad hearts and in great dismay.

CHAPTER X

A TELEGRAM AND A CALLER

"You say," asked Maitland, as they surveyed the cañon, "that she went down the stream?"

"She said she was goin' down. I showed her how to cut across the mountains an' avoid the big bend, I've got no reason to suspicion that she didn't go w'ere she said."

"Nevertheless," said Maitland, "it is barely possible that she may have changed her mind and gone up the cañon."

"Yep, the female mind does often change unexpected like," returned the other, "but w'ether she went up or down, the only place for us to look, I take it, is down, for if she's alive, if she got out of the cañon and is above us, nacherly she'd follow it down yere an' we'd a seed her by this time. If she didn't git out of the cañon, why, all that's left of her is bound to be down stream."

Maitland nodded, he understood.

"We'd better go down then," continued Kirkby, whose reasoning was flawless except that it made no allowance for the human-divine interposition that had been Enid Maitland's salvation.

"An' if we don't find no traces of her down stream, we kin come back here an' go up."

It was a hard desperate journey the two men took. One of them followed the stream at its level, the other tramped along in the mountains high above the high water mark of the day before. If they had needed any evidence of the power of that cloud burst and storm, they found it in the cañon. In some places where it was narrow and rocky, the pass had been fearfully scoured; at other places the whole aspect of it was changed. The place was a welter of up-rooted trees, logs jammed together in fantastic shapes; it was as if some wanton besom of destruction had swept the narrow rift.

Ever as they went they called and called. The broken obstructions of the way made their progress slow; what they would have passed over ordinarily in half a day, they had not traversed by nightfall and they had seen nothing. They camped that night far down the cañon and in the morning with hearts growing heavier every hour they resumed their search.

About noon of the second day they came to an immense log jam where the stream now broadened and made a sudden turn before it plunged over a fall of perhaps two hundred feet into the lake. It was the end of their quest. If they did

not find her there, they would never find her anywhere, they thought. With still hearts and bated breath they climbed out over the log jam and scrutinized it. A brownish gray patch concealed beneath the great pines caught their eyes. They made their way to it.

"It's a b'ar, a big grizzly," exclaimed Kirkby.

The huge brute was battered out of all semblance of life, but that it was a grizzly bear was clearly evident. Further on the two men caught sight suddenly of a dash of blue. Kirkby stepped over to it, lifted it in his hand and silently extended it to Maitland. It was a sweater, a woman's sweater. They recognized it at once. The old man shook his head. Maitland groaned aloud.

"See yere," said Kirkby, pointing to the ragged and torn garment where evidences of discoloration still remained, "looks like there'd bin blood on it."

"Heavens!" cried Maitland, "not that bear, I'd rather anything than that."

"W'atever it is, she's gone," said the old man with solemn finality.

"Her body may be in these logs here — "

"Or in the lake," answered Kirkby gloomily; "but w'erever she is we can't git to her now."

"We must come back with dynamite to break up this jam and — "

"Yep," nodded the old man, "we'll do all that, of course, but now, arter we search this jam o' logs I guess there's nothin' to do but go back, an' the quicker we git back to the settlement, the quicker we can git back here. I think we kin strike acrost the mountains an' save a day an' a half. There's no need of us goin' back up the cañon now, I take it."

"No," answered the other. "The quicker the better, as you say, and we can head off George and the others that way."

They searched the pile eagerly, prying under it, peering into it, upsetting it, so far as they could with their naked hands, but with little result, for they found nothing else. They had to camp another day and next morning they hurried straight over the mountains, reaching the settlement almost as soon as the others. Maitland with furious energy at once organized a relief party. They hurried back to the logs, tore the jam to pieces, searched it carefully and found nothing. To drag the lake was impossible; it was hundreds of feet deep and while they worked it froze. The weather had changed some days before, heavy snows had already fallen, they had to get out of the mountains without further delay or else

be frozen up to die. Then and not till then did Maitland give up hope. He had refrained from wiring to Philadelphia, but when he reached a telegraph line some ten days after the cloud burst, he sent a long message east, breaking to his brother the awful tidings.

And in all that they did he and Kirkby, two of the shrewdest and most experienced of men, showed with singular exactitude how easy it is for the wisest and most capable of men to make mistakes, to leave the plain trail, to fail to deduce the truth from the facts presented. Yet it is difficult to point to a fault in their reasoning, or to find anything left undone in the search.

Enid had started down the cañon, near the end of it they had discovered one of her garments which they could not conceive any reason for her taking off. It was near the battered body of one of the biggest grizzlies that either man had ever seen, it held evidence of blood stains upon it still, they had found no body, but they were as profoundly sure that the mangled remains of the poor girl lay within the depths of that mountain lake as if they had actually seen her there. The logic was all flawless.

It so happened that on that November morning, when the telegram was approaching him, Mr. Stephen Maitland had a caller. He came

at an unusually early hour. Mr. Stephen Maitland, who was no longer an early riser, had indeed just finished his breakfast when the card of Mr. James Armstrong of Colorado was handed to him.

"This, I suppose," he thought testily, "is one of the results of Enid's wanderings into that Godforsaken land. Did you ask the man his business, James?" he said aloud to the footman.

"Yes, sir; he said he wanted to see you on important business, and when I made bold to ask him what business, he said it was none of mine, and for me to take the message to you, sir."

"Impudent," growled Mr. Maitland.

"Yes, sir; but he is the kind of a gentleman you don't talk back to, sir."

"Well, you go back and tell him that you have given me his card, and I should like to know what he wishes to see me about, that I am very busy this morning and unless it is a matter of importance — you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"I suppose now I shall have the whole west unloaded upon me; every vagabond friend of Robert's and people who meet Enid," he thought, but his reveries were shortly interrupted by the return of the man.

"If you please, sir," began James hesitatingly,

as he re-entered the room, "he says his business is about the young lady, sir."

"Confound his impudence!" exclaimed Mr. Maitland, more and more annoyed at what he was pleased to characterize mentally as western assurance. "Where is he?"

"In the hall, sir."

"Show him into the library and say I shall be down in a moment."

"Very good, sir."

It was a decidedly wrathful individual who confronted Stephen Maitland a few moments afterwards in the library, for Armstrong was not accustomed to such cavalier treatment, and had Maitland been other than Enid's father he would have given more outward expression of his indignation over the discourtesy in his reception.

"Mr. James Armstrong, I believe," began Mr. Maitland, looking at the card in his hand.

"Yes, sir."

"Er — from Colorado?"

"And proud of it."

"Ah, I dare say. I believe you wished to see me about — "

"Your daughter, sir."

"And in what way are you concerned about her, sir?"

"I wish to make her my wife."

"What!" exclaimed the older man in a voice equally divided between horror and astonishment. "How dare you, sir? You amaze me beyond measure with your infernal impudence."

"Excuse me, Mr. Maitland," interposed Armstrong quickly and with great spirit and determination, "but where I come from we don't allow anybody to talk to us in this way. You are Enid's father and a much older man than I, but I can't permit you to —"

"Sir," said the astounded Maitland, drawing himself up at this bold flouting, "you may be a very worthy young man, I have no doubt of it, but it is out of the question. My daughter —"

Again a less excited hearer might have noticed the emphasis on the pronoun.

"Why, she is half way engaged to me now," interrupted the younger man with a certain contemptuous amusement in his voice. "Look here, Mr. Maitland, I've knocked around the world a good deal, I know what's what, I know all about you Eastern people, and I don't fancy you any more than you fancy me. Miss Enid is quite unspoiled yet and that is why I want her. I'm well able to take care of her too; I don't know what you've got or how you got it, but I can come near laying down dollar for dollar with you and

mine's all clean money, mines, cattle, lumber, and it's all good money. I made it myself. I left her in the mountains three weeks ago with her promise that she would think very seriously of my suit. After I came back to Denver — I was called east — I made up my mind that I'd come here when I'd finished my business and have it out with you. Now you can treat me like a dog if you want to, but if you expect to keep peace in the family you'd better not, for I tell you plainly whether you give your consent or not I mean to win her. All I want is her consent, and I've pretty nearly got that."

Mr. Stephen Maitland was black with wrath at this clear, unequivocal, determined statement of the case from Armstrong's point of view.

"I would rather see her dead," he exclaimed with angry stubbornness, "than married to a man like you. How dare you force yourself into my house and insult me in this way? Were I not so old a man I would show you, I would give you a taste of your own manner."

The old man's white mustache fairly quivered with what he believed to be righteous indignation. He stepped over to the other and looked hard at him, his eyes blazing, his ruddy cheeks redder than ever. The two men confronted each other unblenchingly for a moment, then Mr. Maitland

touched a bell button in the wall by his side. Instantly the footman made his appearance.

"James," said the old man, his voice shaking and his knees trembling with passion, which he did not quite succeed in controlling despite a desperate effort, "show this — er — gentleman the door. Good morning, sir, our first and last interview is over."

He bowed with ceremonious politeness as he spoke, becoming more and more composed as he felt himself mastering the situation. And Armstrong, to do him justice, knew a gentleman when he saw him, and secretly admired the older man and began to feel a touch of shame at his own rude way of putting things.

"Beg pardon, sir," said the footman, breaking the awkward silence, "but here is a telegram that has just come, sir."

There was nothing for Armstrong to do or say. Indeed, having expressed himself so unrestrainedly to his rapidly increasing regret, as the old man took the telegram he turned away in considerable discomfiture, James bowing before him at the door opening into the hall and following him as he slowly passed out. Mr. Stephen Maitland mechanically and with great deliberation and with no premonition of evil tidings, tore open the yellow envelope and glanced at the dispatch.

Neither the visitor nor the footman had got out of sight or hearing when they heard the old man groan and fall back helplessly into a chair. Both men turned and ran back to the door, for there was that in the exclamation which gave rise to instant apprehension. Stephen Maitland now as white as death sat collapsed in the chair gasping for breath, his hand on his heart. The telegram lay open on the floor. Armstrong recognized the seriousness of the situation, and in three steps was by the other's side.

"What is it?" he asked eagerly, his hatred and resentment vanished at the sight of the old man's ghastly, stricken countenance.

"Enid!" gasped her father. "I said I would rather see her — dead, but — it is not true — I —"

James Armstrong was a man of prompt decision. Without a moment's hesitation he picked up the telegram; it was full and explicit, thus it read:

"We were encamped last week in the mountains. Enid went down the cañon for a day's fishing alone. A sudden cloud burst filled the cañon, washed away the camp. Enid undoubtedly got caught in the torrent and was drowned. We have found some of her clothing but not her body. Have searched every foot of the cañon. Think body has got into the lake now frozen. Snow fall-

ing, mountains impassable, will search for her in the spring when the winter breaks. I am following this telegram in person by first train. Would rather have died a thousand deaths than had this happen. God help us."

"ROBERT MAITLAND."

Armstrong read it, stared at it a moment frowning heavily, passed it over to the footman and turned to the stricken father.

"Old man, I loved her," he said simply. "I love her still, I believe that she loves me. They haven't found her body, clothes mean nothing, I'll find her, I'll search the mountains until I do. Don't give way, something tells me that she's alive, and I'll find her."

"If you do," said the broken old man, crushed by the swift and awful response to his thoughtless exclamation, "and she loves you, you shall have her for your wife."

"It doesn't need that to make me find her," answered Armstrong grimly. "She is a woman, lost in the mountains in the winter, alone. They shouldn't have given up the search; I'll find her as there is a God above me whether she's for me or not."

A good deal of a man this James Armstrong of Colorado, in spite of many things in his past of which he thought so little that he lacked the grace to be ashamed of them. Stephen Maitland

looked at him with a certain respect and a growing hope, as he stood there in the library stern, resolute, strong.

Perhaps —

CHAPTER XI

"OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY"

RECOGNITION — or some other more potent instantaneous force — brought the woman to a sitting position. The man drew back to give her freedom of action, as she lifted herself on her hands. It was moments before complete consciousness of her situation came to her; the surprise was yet too great. She saw things dimly through a whirl of driving rain, of a rushing mighty wind, of a seething sea of water, but presently it was all plain to her again. She had caught no fair view of the man who had shot the bear as he splashed through the creek and tramped across the rocks and trees down the cañon, at least she had not seen his front face, but she recognized him immediately. The thought tinged with color for a moment, her pallid cheek.

"I fell into the torrent," she said feebly, putting her hand to her head and striving by speech to put aside that awful remembrance.

"You didn't fall in," was the answer. "It was a cloud burst, you were caught in it."

"I didn't know."

"Of course not, how should you."

"And how came I here?"

"I was lucky enough to pull you out."

"Did you jump into the flood for me?"

The man nodded.

"That's twice you have saved my life this day," said the girl, forcing herself woman-like to the topic that she hated.

"It's nothing," deprecated the other.

"It may be nothing to you, but it is a great deal to me," was the answer. "And now what is to be done?"

"We must get out of here at once," said the man. "You need shelter, food, a fire. Can you walk?"

"I don't know."

"Let me help you." He rose to his feet, reached down to her, took her hands in the strong grasp of his own and raised her lightly to her feet in an effortless way which showed his great strength. She did not more than put the weight of her body slightly on her left foot when a spasm of pain shot through her, she swerved and would have fallen had he not caught her. He sat her gently on the rock.

"My foot," she said piteously. "I don't know what's the matter with it."

Her high boots were tightly laced of course,

but he could see that her left foot had been badly mauled or sprained, already the slender ankle was swelling visibly. He examined it swiftly a moment. It might be a sprain, it might be the result of some violent thrust against the rocks, some whirling tree trunks might have caught and crushed her foot, but there was no good in speculating as to causes; the present patent fact was that she could not walk, all the rest was at that moment unimportant. This unfortunate accident made him the more anxious to get her to a place of shelter without delay. It would be necessary to take off her boot and give the wounded member proper treatment. For the present the tight shoe acted as a bandage, which was well.

When the man had withdrawn himself from the world, he had inwardly resolved that no human being should ever invade his domain or share his solitude, and during his long sojourn in the wilderness his determination had not weakened. Now his consuming desire was to get this woman, whom fortune — good or ill! — had thrown upon his hands, to his house without delay. There was nothing he could do for her out there in the rain. Every drop of whiskey was gone; they were just two half-drowned, sodden bits of humanity cast up on that rocky shore, and one was a helpless woman.

"Do you know where your camp is?" he asked at last.

He did not wish to take her to her own camp, he had a strange instinct of possession in her. In some way he felt he had obtained a right to deal with her as he would; he had saved her life twice, once by chance, the other as the result of deliberate and heroic endeavor, and yet his honor and his manhood obliged him to offer to take her to her own people if he could. Hence the question, the answer to which he waited so eagerly.

"It's down the cañon. I am one of Mr. Robert Maitland's party."

The man nodded. He didn't know Robert Maitland from Adam, and he cared nothing about him.

"How far down?" he asked.

"I don't know; how far is it from here to where you — where — where we — "

"About a mile," he replied quickly, fully understanding her reason for faltering.

"Then I think I must have come at least five miles from the camp this morning."

"It will be four miles away then," said the man.

The girl nodded.

"I couldn't carry you that far," he murmured half to himself. "I question if there is any camp

left there anyway. Where was it, down by the water's edge?"

"Yes."

"Every vestige will have been swept away by that, look at it," he pointed over to the lake.

"What must we do?" she asked instantly, depending upon his greater strength, his larger experience, his masculine force.

"I shall have to take you to my camp."

"Is it far?"

"About a mile or a mile and a half from here."

"I can't walk that far."

"No, I suppose not. You wouldn't be willing to stay here while I went down and hunted for your camp?"

The girl clutched at him.

"I couldn't be left here for a moment alone," she said in sudden fever of alarm. "I never was afraid before, but now —"

"All right," he said, gently patting her as he would a child, "we'll go up to my camp and then I will try to find your people and —"

"But I tell you I can't walk!"

"You don't have to walk," said the man.

He did not make any apology for his next action, he just stooped down and disregarding her faint protests and objections, picked her up in his

arms. She was by no means a light burden, and he did not run away with her as the heroes of romances do. But he was a man far beyond the average in strength, and with a stout heart and a resolute courage that had always carried him successfully through whatever he attempted, and he had need of all his qualities, physical and mental, before he finished that awful journey.

The woman struggled a little at first, then finally resigned herself to the situation; indeed, she thought swiftly, there was nothing else to do; she had no choice, she could not have been left alone there in the rocks in that rain, she could not walk. He was doing the only thing possible. The compulsion of the inevitable was upon them both.

They went slowly. The man often stopped for rest, at which times he would seat her carefully upon some prostrate tree, or some rounded boulder, until he was ready to resume his task. He did not bother her with explanation, discussion or other conversation, for which she was most thankful. Once or twice during the slow progress she tried to walk, but the slightest pressure on her wounded foot nearly caused her to faint. He made no complaint about his burden and she found it after all pleasant to be upheld by such powerful arms; she was so sick, so tired, so worn

out, and there was such assurance of strength and safety in his firm hold of her.

By and by, in the last stage of their journey, her head dropped on his shoulder and she actually fell into an uneasy troubled sleep. He did not know whether she slumbered or whether she had fainted again. He did not dare to stop to find out, his strength was almost spent; in this last effort the strain upon his muscles was almost as great as it had been in the whirlpool. For the second time that day the sweat stood out on his forehead, his legs trembled under him. How he made the last five hundred feet up the steep wall to a certain broad shelf perhaps an acre in extent where he had built his hut among the mountains, he never knew; but the last remnant of his force was spent when he finally opened the unlatched door with his foot, carried her into the log hut and laid her upon the bed or bunk built against one wall of the cabin.

Yet the way he put her down was characteristic of the man. That last vestige of strength had served him well. He did not drop her as a less thoughtful and less determined man might have done; he laid her there as gently and as tenderly as if she weighed nothing, and as if he had carried her nowhere. So quiet and easy was his handling of her that she did not wake up at once.

So soon as she was out of his arms, he stood up and stared at her in great alarm which soon gave way to reassurance. She had not fainted; there was a little tinge of color in her cheek that had rubbed up against his rough wet shoulder; she was asleep, her regular breathing told him that. Sleep was of course the very best medicine for her and yet she should not be allowed to sleep until she had got rid of her wet clothing and until something had been done for her wounded foot. It was indeed an embarrassing situation.

He surveyed her for a few moments wondering how best to begin. Then realizing the necessity for immediate action, he bent over and woke her up. Again she stared at him in bewilderment until he spoke.

"This is my house," he said, "we are home."

"Home!" sobbed the girl.

"Under shelter, then," said the man. "You are very tired and very sleepy, but there is something to be done. You must take off those wet clothes at once, you must have something to eat, and I must have a look at that foot, and then you can have your sleep out."

The girl stared at him; his program, if a radical one under the circumstances, was nevertheless a rational one, indeed the only one. How was it

"Wait! I am a woman, absolutely alone, entirely at your mercy"

to be carried out? The man easily divined her thoughts.

"There is another room in this house, a store room, I cook in there," he said. "I am going in there now to get you something to eat, meanwhile you must undress yourself and go to bed."

He went to a rude set of box-like shelves draped with a curtain, apparently his own handiwork, against the wall, and brought from it a long and somewhat shapeless woolen gown.

"You can wear this to sleep in," he continued. "First of all, though, I am going to have a look at that foot."

He bent down to where her wounded foot lay extended on the bed.

"Wait!" said the girl, lifting herself on her arm and as she did so he lifted his head and answered her direct gaze with his own. "I am a woman, absolutely alone, entirely at your mercy, you are stronger than I, I have no choice but to do what you bid me. And in addition to the natural weakness of my sex I am the more helpless from this foot. What do you intend to do with me? How do you mean to treat me?"

It was a bold, a splendid question and it evoked the answer it merited.

"As God is my judge," said the man quietly, "just as you ought to be treated, as I would want

another to treat my mother, or my sister, or my wife — " she noticed how curiously his lips suddenly tightened at that word — " if I had one. I never harmed a woman in my life," he continued more earnestly, " only one, that is," he corrected himself, and once again she marked that peculiar contraction of the lips. " And I could not help that," he added.

" I trust you," said the girl at last after gazing at him long and hard as if to search out the secrets of his very soul. " You have saved my life and things dearer will be safe with you. I have to trust you."

" I hope," came the quick comment, " that it is not only for that. I don't want to be trusted upon compulsion."

" You must have fought terribly for my life in the flood," was the answer. " I can remember what it was now, and you carried me over the rocks and the mountains without faltering. Only a man could do what you have done. I trust you anyway."

" Thank you," said the man briefly as he bent over the injured foot again.

The boot laced up the front, the short skirt left all plainly visible. With deft fingers he undid the sodden knot and unlaced it, then stood hesitatingly for a moment.

"I don't like to cut your only pair of shoes," he said as he made a slight motion to draw it off, and then observing the spasm of pain, he stopped. "Needs must," he continued, taking out his knife and slitting the leather.

He did it very carefully so as not to ruin the boot beyond repair, and finally succeeded in getting it off without giving her too much pain. And she was not so tired or so miserable as to be unaware of his gentleness. His manner, matter-of-fact, business-like, if he had been a doctor one would have called it professional, distinctly pleased her in this trying and unusual position. Her stocking was stained with blood. The man rose to his feet, took from a rude home-made chair a light Mexican blanket and laid it considerately across the girl.

"Now if you can manage to get off your stocking, yourself, I will see what can be done," he said turning away.

It was the work of a few seconds for her to comply with his request. Hanging the wet stocking carefully over a chair back, he drew back the blanket a little and carefully inspected the poor little foot. He saw at once that it was not an ordinary sprained ankle, but it seemed to him that her foot had been caught between two tossing logs, and had been badly bruised. It was

very painful, but would not take so long to heal as a sprain. The little foot, normally so white, was now black and blue and the skin had been roughly torn and broken. He brought a basin of cold water and a towel and washed off the blood, the girl fighting down the pain and successfully stifling any outcry.

"Now," he said, "you must put on this gown and get into bed. By the time you are ready for it I will have some broth for you and then we will bandage that foot. I shall not come in here for some time, you will be quite alone and safe."

He turned and left the room, shutting the door after him as he went out. For a second time that day Enid Maitland undressed herself and this time nervously and in great haste. She was almost too excited and apprehensive to recall the painful circumstances attendant upon her first disrobing. She said she trusted the man absolutely, yet she would not have been human if she had not looked most anxiously toward that closed door. He made plenty of noise in the other room, bustling about as if to reassure her.

She could not rest the weight of her body on her left foot and getting rid of her wet clothes was a somewhat slow process in spite of her hurry, made more so by her extreme nervousness. The gown he gave her was far too big for her, but

soft and warm and exquisitely clean. It draped her slight figure completely. Leaving her sodden garments where they had fallen, for she was not equal to anything else, she wrapped herself in the folds of the big gown and managed to get into bed. For all its rude appearance it was a very comfortable sleeping place, there were springs and a good mattress. The unbleached sheets were clean; although they had been rough dried, there was a delicious sense of comfort and rest in her position. She had scarcely composed herself when he knocked loudly upon her door.

"May I come in?" he asked.

When she bade him enter she saw he had in his hand a saucepan full of some steaming broth. She wondered how he had made it in such a hurry, but after he poured it into a granite ware cup and offered it to her, she took it without question. It was thick, warming and nourishing. He stood by her and insisted that she take more and more. Finally she rebelled.

"Well, perhaps that will do for to-night," he said, "now let's have a look at your foot."

She observed that he had laid on the table a long roll of white cloth; she could not know that he had torn up one of his sheets to make bandages, but so it was. He took the little foot tenderly in his hands.

"I am going to hurt you," he said, "I am going to find out if there is anything more than a bruise, any bones broken."

There was no denying that he did pain her exquisitely.

"I can't help it," he said as she cried aloud. "I have got to see what's the matter, I am almost through now."

"Go on, I can bear it," she said faintly. "I feel so much better anyway now that I am dry and warm."

"So far as I can determine," said the man at last, "it is only a bad ugly bruise; the skin is torn, it has been battered, but it is neither sprained nor broken and I don't think it is going to be very serious. Now I am going to bathe it in the hottest water you can bear, and then I will bandage it and let you go to sleep."

He went out and came back with a kettle of boiling water, with which he laved again and again, the poor, torn, battered little member. Never in her life had anything been so grateful as these repeated applications of hot water. After awhile he applied a healing lotion of some kind, then he took his long roll of bandage and wound it dexterously around her foot, not drawing it too close to prevent circulation, but just

tight enough for support, then as he finished she drew it back beneath the cover.

"Now," said he, "there is nothing more I can do for you to-night, is there?"

"Nothing."

"I want you to go to sleep now, you will be perfectly safe here. I am going down the cañon to search —"

"No," said the girl apprehensively. "I dare not be left alone here; besides I know how dangerous it would be for you to try to descend the cañon in this rain. You have risked enough for me, you must wait until the morning. I shall feel better then."

"But think of the anxiety of your friends."

"I can't help it," was the nervous reply. "I am afraid to be left alone here at night."

Her voice trembled, he was fearful she would have a nervous breakdown.

"Very well," he said soothingly, "I will not leave you till the morning."

"Where will you stay?"

"I'll make a shakedown for myself in the store room," he answered. "I shall be right within call at any time."

It had grown dark outside by this time and the two in the log hut could barely see each other.

"I think I shall light the fire," continued the man; "it will be sort of company for you and it gets cold up here of nights at this season. I shouldn't wonder if this rain turned into snow. Besides, it will dry your clothes for you."

Then he went over to the fireplace, struck a match, touched it to the kindling under the huge logs already prepared, and in a moment a cheerful blaze was roaring up through the chimney. Then he picked up from the floor where she had cast them in a heap, her bedraggled garments. He straightened them out as best he could, hung them over the backs of chairs and the table which he drew as near to the fire as was safe. Having completed this unwonted task he turned to the woman who had watched him curiously and nervously the while.

"Is there anything more that I can do for you?"

"Nothing; you have been as kind and as gentle as you were strong and brave."

He threw his hand out with a deprecating gesture.

"Are you quite comfortable?"

"Yes."

"And your foot?"

"Seems very much better."

"Good night then, I will call you in the morning."

"Good night," said the girl gratefully, "and God bless you for a true and noble man."

CHAPTER XII

ON THE TWO SIDES OF THE DOOR

THE cabin contained a large and a small room. In the wall between them there was a doorway closed by an ordinary batten door with a wooden latch and no lock. Closed it served to hide the occupant of one room from the view of the other, otherwise it was but a feeble barrier. Even had it possessed a lock, a vigorous man could have burst it through in a moment.

These thoughts did not come very clearly to Enid Maitland. Few thoughts of any kind came to her. Where she lay she could see plainly the dancing light of the glorious fire. She was warm; the deftly wrapped bandage, the healing lotion upon her foot, had greatly relieved the pain in that wounded member. The bed was hard but comfortable, much more so than the sleeping bags to which of late she had been accustomed.

Few women had gone through such experiences mental and physical as had befallen her within the last few hours and lived to tell the story. Had it not been for the exhaustive strains of body and spirit to which she had been subjected,

her mental faculties would have been on the alert and the strangeness of her unique position would have made her so nervous that she could not have slept.

For the time being, however, the physical demands upon her entity were paramount. She was dry, she was warm, she was fed, she was free from anxiety and she was absolutely unutterably weary. Her thoughts were vague, inchoate, unconcentrated. The fire wavered before her eyes, she closed them in a few moments and did not open them.

Without a thought, without a care, she fell asleep. Her repose was complete, not a dream even disturbed the profound slumber into which she sank. Pretty picture she made; her head thrown backward, her golden hair roughly dried and quickly plaited in long braids, one of which fell along the pillow while the other curled lovingly around her neck. Her face in the natural light would have looked pallid from what she had gone through, but the fire cast red glows upon it; the fitful light flickered across her countenance and sometimes the color wavered, it came and went as if in consciousness; and sometimes deep shadows unrelieved accentuated the paleness born of her sufferings.

There is no light that plays so many tricks with

the imagination, or that so stimulates the fancy as the light of an open fire. In its sudden outbursts it sometimes seems to add life touches to the sleeping and the dead. Had there been any eye to see this girl, she would have made a delightful picture in the warm glow from the stone hearth. There were no eyes to look, however, save those which belonged to the man on the other side of the door.

On the hither side of that door in the room where the fire burned on the hearth, there was rest in the heart of the woman, on the farther side where the fire only burned in the heart of the man, there was tumult. Not outward and visible, but inward and spiritual, and yet there was no lack of apparent manifestation of the turmoil in the man's soul.

Albeit the room was smaller than the other, it was still of a good size. He walked nervously up and down from one end to the other as ceaselessly as a wild animal impatient of captivity stalks the narrow limits of his contracted cage. The even tenor of his life had suddenly been diverted. The ordinary sequence of his days had been abruptly changed. The privacy of five years, which he had hoped and dreamed might exist as long as he, had been rudely broken in upon. Humanity, which he had avoided, from which he

had fled, which he had cast away forever, had found him. *Abiit, excessit, evasit, erupit!* And, lo, his departures were all in vain! The world, with all its grandeur and its insignificance, with all its powers and its weaknesses, with all its opportunities and its obligations, with all its joys and its sorrows, had knocked at his door; and that the knocking hand was that of a woman, but added to his perplexity and to his dismay.

He had cherished a dream that he could live to himself alone with but a memory to bear him company, and from that dream he had been thunderously awakened. Everything was changed. What had once been easy had now become impossible. He might send her away, but though he swore her to secrecy she would have to tell her story and something of his; the world would learn some of it and seek him out with insatiable curiosity to know the rest.

Eyes as keen as his would presently search and scrutinize the mountains where he had roamed alone. They would see what he had seen, find what he had found. Mankind, gold-lusting, would swarm and hive upon the hills and fight and love and breed and die.

He would of course move on, but where? And went he whithersoever he might, he would

now of necessity carry with him another memory which would not dwell within his mind in harmony with the memory which until that day had been paramount there alone.

Slowly, laboriously, painfully, he had built his house upon the sand, and the winds had blown and the floods had come, not only in a literal but in a spiritual significance, and in one day that house had fallen. He stood amid the wrecked remains of it trying to recreate it, to endow once more with the fitted precision of the past the shapeless broken units of the fabric of his fond imagination.

Whiles he resented with fierce, savage, passionate intensity the interruption of this woman into his life. Whiles he throbbed with equal intensity and almost as much passion at the thought of her.

Have you ever climbed a mountain early in the morning while it was yet dark and having gained some dominant crest stood staring at the far horizon, the empurpled east, while the "dawn came up like thunder?" Or, better still, have you ever stood within the cold dark recesses of some deep valley of river or pass and watched the clear light spread its bars athwart the heavens, like nebulous mighty pinions, along the light touched crest of a towering range until all of a

sudden, with a leap almost of joy, the great sun blazed in the high horizon?

You might be born a child of the dark, and light might sear and burn your eyeballs accustomed to cooler, deeper shades, yet you could no more turn away from this glory, though you might hate it, than by mere effort of will you could cease to breathe the air. The shock that you might feel, the sudden surprise, is only faintly suggestive of the emotions in the breast of this man.

Once long ago the gentlest and tenderest of voices called from the dark to the light, the blind. And it is given to modern science and to modern skill sometimes to emulate that godlike achievement. Perhaps the surprise, the amazement, the bewilderment, of him who having been blind doth now see, if we can imagine it, not having been in the case ourselves, will be a better guide to the understanding of this man's emotion when this woman came suddenly into his lonely orbit. His eyes were opened although he would not know it. He fought down his new consciousness and would have none of it. Yet it was there. He loved her!

With what joy did Selkirk welcome the savage sharer of his solitude! Suppose she had been a woman of his own race; had she been old, withered, hideous, he must have loved her on the in-

stant, much more if she were young and beautiful. The thing was inevitable. Such passions are born. God forbid that we should deny it. Even in the busy haunts of men where women are as plenty as blackberries, to use Falstaff's simile, and where a man may sometimes choose between a hundred, or a thousand, often such loves are born, forever.

A voice in the night, a face in the street, a whispered word, the touch of a hand, the answering throb of another heart — and behold! two walk together where before each walked alone. Sometimes the man or the woman who is born again of love knows it not, declines to admit it, refuses to recognize it. Some birth pain must awake the consciousness of the new life.

If those things are true and possible under every day conditions and to ordinary men and women, how much more to this solitary. He had seen this woman, white breasted like the foam, rising as the ancient goddess from the Paphian Sea. Over that recollection, as he was a gentleman and a Christian, he would fain draw a curtain, before it erect a wall. He must not dwell upon that fact, he would not linger over that moment. Yet he could not forget it.

Then he had seen her lying prone, yet unconsciously graceful in her abandonment, on the

sward; he had caught a glimpse of her white face desperately up-tossed by the rolling water; he had looked into the unfathomable depths of her eyes at that moment when she had awakened in his arms after such a struggle as had taxed his manhood and almost broken his heart; he had carried her unconsciously, ghastly white with her pain-drawn face, stumbling desperately over the rocks in the beating rain to this his home. There he had held that poor, bruised slender little foot in his hand, gently, skillfully treating it, when he longed to press his lips passionately upon it. Last of all he had looked into her face warmed with the red light of the fire, searched her weary eyes almost like blue pools, in whose depths there yet lurked life and light, while her golden hair tinged crimson by the blaze lay on the white pillow — and he loved her. God pity him, fighting against fact and admission of it, yet how could he help it?

He had loved once before in his life with the fire of youth and spring, but it was not like this; he did not recognize this new passion in any light from the past, therefore he would not admit it, hence he did not understand it. But he saw and admitted and understood enough to know that the past was no longer the supreme subject in his life, that the present rose higher, bulked larger

and hid more and more of his far-off horizon.

He felt like a knave and a traitor, as if he had been base, disloyal, false to his ideal, recreant to his remembrance. Was he indeed a true man? Did he have that rugged strength, that abiding faith, that eternal consciousness, that lasting affection beside which the rocky paths he often trod were things transient, perishable, evanescent? Was he a weakling that he fell at the first sight of another woman?

He stopped his ceaseless pace forward and backward, and stopped near that frail and futile door. She was there and there was none to prevent. His hand sought the latch.

What was he about to do? God forbid that a thought he could not freely share with humanity should enter his brain then. He held all women sacred, and so he had ever done, and this woman in her loveliness, in her helplessness, in her weakness, trebly appealed to him. But he would look upon her, he would fain see if she were there, if it were all not a dream, the creation of his disordered imagination.

Men had gone mad in hermitages in the mountains, they had been driven insane in lonely oases in vast deserts; and they had peopled their solitudes with men and women. Was this same working of a disordered brain too much turned

upon itself and with too tremendous a pressure upon it producing an illusion? Was there in truth any woman there? He would raise the latch and open the door and look. Once more the hand went stealthily to the latch.

The woman slept quietly on. No thin barricade easily unlocked or easily broken protected her. Something intangible yet stronger than the thickest, the most rigid, bars of steel guarded her; something unseen, indescribable, but so unmistakable when it throbs in the breast that those who depend on it feel that their dependence is not in vain, watched over her.

Cherishing no evil thought, the man had power to gratify his desire which might yet bear a sinister construction should his action be observed. It was her privacy he was invading; she had trusted to him, she had said so, to his honor and that stood her in good stead. His honor! Not in five years had he heard the word or thought the thing, but he had not forgotten it. She had not appealed to an unreal thing. Upon a rock her trust was based. His hand left the latch, it fell gently, he drew back and turned away trembling, a conqueror who mastered himself. He was awake to the truth again.

What had he been about to do? Profane, uninvited, the sanctity of her chamber, violate the

hospitality of his own house. Even with a proper motive imperil his self-respect, shatter her trust, endanger that honor which so suddenly became a part of him on demand. She would not probably know, she could never know unless she awoke. What of that? That ancient honor of his life and race rose like a mountain whose scarped face cannot be scaled.

He fell back with a swift turn, a feeling almost womanly — and more men perhaps if they lived in feminine isolation, as self-centered as woman are so often by necessity, would be as feminine as their sisters — influenced him, overcame him. His hand went to his hunting shirt; nervously he tore it open, he grasped a bright object that hung against his breast; as he did so, the thought came to him that not before in five years had he been for a moment unconscious of the pressure of that locket over his heart, but now that this other had come, he had to seek for it to find it.

The man dragged it out, held it in his hand and opened it. He held it so tightly that it almost gave beneath the strong grasp of his strong hand. From a near-by box he drew another object with his other hand; he took the two to the light, the soft light of the candle upon the table, and stared from one to the other with eyes brimming.

Like crystal gazers he saw other things than

those presented to the casual vision, he heard other sounds than the beat of the rain upon the roof, the roar of the wind down the cañon. A voice that he had sworn he would never forget, but which, God forgive him, had not now the clearness that it might have had yesterday, whispered awful words to him.

Anon he looked into another face, red too, but with no hue from the hearth or leaping flame, but red with the blood of ghastly wounds. He heard again that report, the roar louder and more terrible than any peal of thunder that rived the clouds above his head and made the mountains quake and tremble. He was conscious again of the awful stillness of death that supervened. He dropped on his knees, buried his face in his hands where they rested on picture and locket on the rude table.

Ah, the past died hard; for a moment he was the lover of old — remorse, passionate expiation, solitude — he and the dead together — the world and the living forgot! He would not be false, he would be true; there was no power in any feeble woman's tender hand to drive him off his course, to shake his purpose, to make him a new, another man. *O, Vanitas, Vanitatum!*

On the other side of the door the unconscious woman slept quietly on. The red fire light died

away, the glowing coals sank into gray ash. Within the smaller room the cold dawn stealing through the unshaded window looked upon a field of battle — deaths, wounds, triumphs, defeats — portrayed upon one poor human face, upturned as sometimes victors and vanquished alike upturn stark faces from the field to the God above who may pity but who has not intervened.

So Jacob may have looked after that awful night when he wrestled until the day broke with the angel and would not let him go until he blessed him, walking, forever after, with halting step as memorial but with his blessing earned. Hath this man blessing won or not? And must he pay for it if he hath achieved it?

And all the while the woman slept quietly on upon the other side of that door.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LOG HUT IN THE MOUNTAINS

WHAT awakened the woman she did not know; in all probability it was the bright sunlight streaming through the narrow window before her. The cabin was so placed that the sun did not strike fairly into the room until it was some hours high, consequently she had her long sleep out entirely undisturbed. The man had made no effort whatever to awaken her. Whatever tasks he had performed since daybreak had been so silently accomplished that she had not been aware of them.

So soon as he could do so, he had left the cabin and was now busily engaged in his daily duties outside the cabin and beyond earshot. He knew that sleep was the very best medicine for her and it was best that she should not be disturbed until in her own good time she awoke.

The clouds had emptied themselves during the night and the wind had at last died away toward morning and now there was a great calm abroad in the land. The sunlight was dazzling. Outside, where the untempered rays beat full upon

the crests of the mountains, it was doubtless warm, but within the cabin it was chilly — the fire had long since burned completely away and he had not entered the room to replenish it. Yet Enid Maitland had lain snug and warm under her blankets. She presently tested her wounded foot by moving it gently and discovered agreeably that it was much less painful than she had anticipated. The treatment of the night before had been very successful.

She did not get up immediately, but the coldness of the room struck her so soon as she got out of bed. Upon her first awakening she was hardly conscious of her situation; her sleep had been too long and too heavy and her awakening too gradual for any sudden appreciation of the new condition. It was not until she had stared around the walls of the rude cabin for some time that she realized where she was and what had happened. When she did so she arose at once.

Her first impulse was to call. Never in her life had she felt such death-like stillness. Even in the camp almost always there had been a whisper of breeze through the pine trees, or the chatter of water over the rocks. But here there were no pine trees and no sound of rushing brook came to her. It was almost painful. She was keen to dress and go out of the house. She stood upon

the rude puncheon floor on one foot scarcely able yet to bear even the lightest pressure upon the other. There were her clothes on chairs and tables before the fireplace. Such had been the heat thrown out by that huge blaze that a brief inspection convinced her that everything was thoroughly dry. Dry or wet she must needs put them on since they were all she had. She noticed that there were no locks on the doors and she realized that the only protection she had was the sense of decency and the honor of the man. That she had been allowed her sleep unmolested made her the more confident on that account.

She dressed hastily, although it was the work of some difficulty in view of her wounded foot and of the stiff condition of her rough dried apparel. Presently she was completely clothed save for that disabled foot. With the big clumsy bandages upon it she could not draw her stocking over it and even if she succeeded in that she could in no way make shift to put on her boot.

The situation was awkward, the predicament annoying; she was wearing bloomers and a short skirt for her mountain climbing and she did not know quite what to do. She thought of tearing up one of the rough unbleached sheets and wrapping it around her leg, but she hesitated as to that. It was very trying. Otherwise she would

have opened the door and stepped out into the open air, now she felt herself virtually a prisoner.

She had been thankful that no one had disturbed her, but now she wished for the man. In her helplessness she thought of his resourcefulness with eagerness. The man however did not appear and there was nothing for her to do but to wait for him. Taking one of the blankets from the bed, she sat down and drew it across her knees and took stock of the room.

The cabin was built of logs, the room was large, perhaps twelve by twenty feet, with one side completely taken up by the stone fireplace; there were two windows, one on either side of the outer door which opened toward the southwest. The walls were unplastered save in the chinks between the rough hewn logs of which it was made. Over the fireplace and around on one side ran a rude shelf covered with books. She had no opportunity to examine them, although later she would become familiar with every one of them.

Into the walls on the other side were driven wooden pegs; from some of them hung a pair of snow shoes, a heavy Winchester rifle, fishing tackle and other necessary wilderness paraphernalia. On the puncheon floor wolf and bear

skins were spread. In one corner against the wall again were piled several splendid pairs of horns from the mountain sheep.

The furniture consisted of the single bed or berth in which she had slept, built against the wall in one of the corners, a rude table on which were writing materials and some books. A row of curtained shelves, evidently made of small boxes and surmounted by a mirror, occupied another space. There were two or three chairs, the handiwork of the owner, comfortable enough in spite of their rude construction. On some other pegs hung a slicker and a sou'wester, a fur overcoat, a fur cap and other rough clothes; a pair of heavy boots stood by the fireplace. On another shelf there were a number of scientific instruments the nature of which she could not determine, although she could see that they were all in a beautiful state of preservation.

There was plenty of rude comfort in the room which was excessively mannish. In fact there was nothing anywhere which in any way spoke of the existence of woman — except a picture in a small rough wooden frame which stood on the table before which she sat down. The picture was of a handsome woman — naturally Enid Maitland saw that before anything else; she would not have been a woman if that had not en-

gaged her attention more forcibly than any other fact in the room. She picked it up and studied it long and earnestly, quite unconscious of the reason for her interest, and yet a certain uneasy feeling might have warned her of what was toward in her bosom.

This young woman had not yet had time to get her bearings, she had not been able to realize all the circumstances of her adventure; so soon as she did so she would know that into her life a man had come and whatever the course of that life might be in the future, he would never again be out of it.

It was therefore with mingled and untranslatable emotions that she studied this picture. She marked with a certain resentment the bold beauty quite apparent despite the dim fading outlines of a photograph never very good. So far as she could discern the woman was dark haired and dark eyed — her direct antithesis! The casual viewer would have found little to find fault with in the presentment, but Enid Maitland's eyes were sharpened by — what, pray? At any rate she decided that the woman was of a rather coarse fiber, that in things finer and higher she would be found wanting. She was such a woman, so the girl reasoned acutely, as might inspire a passionate affection in a strong hearted, reckless youth, but whose

charms being largely physical would pall in longer and more intimate association; a dangerous rival in a charge, but not so formidable in a steady campaign.

These thoughts were the result of long and earnest inspection and it was with some reluctance that the girl at last put the photograph aside and looked toward the door. She was hungry, ravenously so. She began to be a little alarmed and had just about made up her mind to rise and stumble out as she was, when she heard steps outside and a knock on the door.

"What is it?" she asked in response.

"May I come in?"

"Yes," was the quick answer.

The man opened the door, left it ajar and entered the room.

"Have you been awake long?" he began abruptly.

"Not very."

"I didn't disturb you because you needed sleep more than anything else. How do you feel?"

"Greatly refreshed, thank you."

"And hungry, I suppose?"

"Very."

"I will soon remedy that. Your foot?"

"It seems much better, but I —"

The girl hesitated, blushing. "I can't get my shoe on and—"

"Shall I have another look at it?"

"No, I don't believe it will be necessary. If I may have some of that liniment, or whatever it was you put on it, and more of that bandage, I think I can attend to it myself, but you see my stocking and my boot—"

The man nodded, he seemed to understand; he went to his cracker box chiffonier and drew from it a long coarse woolen stocking.

"That is the best that I can do for you," he said, extending it toward her somewhat diffidently.

"And that will do very nicely," said the girl. "It will cover the bandage and that is the main thing."

The man laid on the table by the side of the stocking another strip of bandage torn from the same sheet; as he did so he noticed the picture. He caught it up quickly, a dark flush spreading over his face, and holding it in his hand he turned abruptly away.

"I will go and cook you some breakfast while you get yourself ready. If you have not washed, you'll find a bucket of water and a basin and towel outside the door."

He went through the inner door as suddenly as he had come through the outer one. He was

a man of few words and whatever of social grace he might once have possessed and in more favorable circumstances exhibited, was not noticeable now; the tenderness with which he had cared for her the night before had also vanished.

His bearing had been cool almost harsh and forbidding and his manner was as grim as his appearance. The conversation had been a brief one and her opportunity for inspection of him consequently limited, yet she had taken him in. She saw a tall splendid man, no longer very young, perhaps, but in the prime of life and vigor. His complexion was dark and burned browner by long exposure to sun and wind, winter and summer. In spite of the brown there was a certain color, a hue of health in his cheeks. His eyes were hazel, sometimes brown, sometimes gray, and sometimes blue, she afterward learned. A short thick closely cut beard and mustache covered the lower part of his face, disguising but not hiding the squareness of his jaw and the firmness of his lips.

He had worn his cap when he entered and when he took it off she noticed that his dark hair was tinged with white. He was dressed in a leather hunting suit, somewhat the worse for wear, but fitting him in a way to give free play to all his muscles. His movements were swift, en-

ergetic and graceful; she did not wonder that he had so easily hurled the bear to one side and had managed to carry her — no light weight, indeed! — over what she dimly recognized must have been a horrible trail, which burdened as he was would have been impossible to a man of less splendid vigor than he.

The cabin was low ceiled and as she had sat looking up at him he had towered above her until he seemed to fill it. Naturally she had scrutinized his every action, as she had hung upon his every word. His swift and somewhat startled movement, his frowning as he had seized the picture on which she had gazed with such interest aroused the liveliest surprise and curiosity in her heart.

Who was this woman? Why was he so quick to remove the picture from her gaze? Thoughts rushed tumultuously through her brain, but she realized at once that she lacked time to indulge them. She could hear him moving about in the other room, she threw aside the blanket with which she had draped herself, changed the bandage on her foot, drew on the heavy woolen stocking which of course was miles too big for her, but which easily took in her foot and ankle encumbered as they were by the rude, heavy but effective wrapping. Thereafter she hobbled to the door and

stood for a moment almost aghast at the splendor and magnificence before her.

He had built his cabin on a level shelf of rock perhaps fifty by a hundred feet in area. It was backed up against an overtowering cliff, otherwise the rock fell away in every direction. She divined that the descent from the shelf into the pocket or valley spread before her was sheer, except off to the right where a somewhat gentler acclivity of huge and broken boulders gave a practicable ascent — a sort of titantic stairs — to the place perched on the mountain side. The shelf was absolutely bare save for the cabin and a few huge boulders. There were a few sparse, stunted trees further up on the mountain side above; a few hundred feet beyond them, however, came the timber line, after which there was nothing but the naked rock.

Below several hundred feet lay a clear emerald pool, whose edges were bordered by pines where it was not dominated by high cliffs. Already the lakelet was rimmed with ice on the shaded side. This enchanting little body of water was fed by the melting snow from the crest and peaks, which in the clear pure sunshine and rarefied air of the mountains seemed to rise and confront her within a stone's throw of the place where she stood.

On one side of the lake in the valley or pocket

beneath there was a little grassy clearing, and there this dweller in the wilderness had built a rude corral for the burros. On a rough bench by the side of the door she saw the primitive conveniences to which he had alluded. The water was delightfully soft and as it had stood exposed to the sun's direct rays for some time, although the air was exceedingly crisp and cold, it was tempered sufficiently to be merely cool and agreeable. She luxuriated in it for a few moments and while she had her face buried in the towel, rough, coarse, but clean, she heard a step. She looked up in time to see the man lay down upon the bench a small mirror and a clean comb. He said nothing as he did so and she had no opportunity to thank him before he was gone. The thoughtfulness of the act affected her strangely and she was very glad of a chance to unbraid her hair, comb it out and plait it again. She had not a hair pin left of course, and all she could do with it was to replait it and let it hang upon her shoulders; her coiffure would have looked very strange to civilization, but out there in the mountains, it was eminently appropriate.

Without noticing details the man felt the general effect as she limped back into the room toward the table. Her breakfast was ready for her; it was a coarse fare, bacon, a baked potato,

hard tack crisped before the fire, coffee black and strong, with sugar but no cream. The dishes matched the fare, too, yet she noticed that the fork was of silver and by her plate there was a napkin, rough dried but of fine linen. The man had just set the brimming smoking coffee pot on the table when she appeared.

"I am sorry I have no cream," he said, and then before she could make comment or reply, he turned and walked out of the door, his purpose evidently being not to embarrass her by his presence while she ate.

Enid Maitland had grown to relish the camp fare, bringing to it the appetite of good health and exertion. She had never eaten anything that tasted so good to her as that rude meal that morning, yet she would have enjoyed it better, she thought, if he had only shared it with her, if she had not been compelled to eat it alone. She hastened her meal on that account, determined as soon as she had finished her breakfast to seek the man and have some definite understanding with him.

And after all she reflected that she was better alone than in his presence, for there would come stealing into her thoughts the distressing episode of the morning before, try as she would to put it out of her mind. Well, she was a fairly sensible

girl, the matter was passed, it could not be helped now, she would forget it as much as was possible. She would recur to it with mortification later on, but the present was so full of grave problems that there was not any room for the past.

CHAPTER XIV

A TOUR OF INSPECTION

THE first thing necessary, she decided, when she had satisfied her hunger and finished her meal, was to get word of her plight and her resting place to her uncle and the men of the party; and the next thing was to get away, where she would never see this man again and perhaps be able to forget what had transpired — yet there was a strange pang of pain in her heart at that thought!

No man on earth had ever so stimulated her curiosity as this one. Who was he? Why was he there? Who was the woman whose picture he had so quickly taken from her gaze? Why had so splendid a man buried himself alone in that wilderness? These reflections were presently interrupted by the reappearance of the man himself.

"Have you finished?" he asked unceremoniously, standing in the doorway as he spoke.

"Yes, thank you, and it was very good indeed."

Dismissing this politeness with a wave of his hand but taking no other notice, he spoke again.

"If you will tell me your name — "

"Maitland, Enid Maitland."

"Miss Maitland?"

The girl nodded.

"And where you came from, I will endeavor to find your party and see what can be done to restore you to them."

"We were camped down that cañon at a place where another brook, a large one, flows into it, several miles I should think below the place where —"

She was going to say "where you found me," but the thought of the way in which he had found her rushed over her again; and this time with his glance directly upon her, although it was as cold and dispassionate and indifferent as a man's look could well be, the recollection of the meeting to which she had been about to allude rushed over her with an accompanying wave of color which heightened her beauty as it covered her with shame.

She could not realize that beneath his mask of indifference so deliberately worn, the man was as agitated as she, not so much at the remembrance of anything that had transpired, but at the sight, the splendid picture, of the woman as she stood there in the little cabin then. It seemed to him as if she gathered up in her own person all the radiance and light and beauty, all the purity and

freshness and splendor of the morning, to shine and dazzle in his face. As she hesitated in confusion, perhaps comprehending its causes he helped out her lame and halting sentence.

"I know the cañon well," he said. "I think I know the place to which you refer; is it just about where the river makes an enormous bend upon itself?"

"Yes, that is it. In that clearing we have been camped for ten days. My uncle must be crazy with anxiety to know what has become of me and —"

The man interposed.

"I will go there directly," he said. "It is now half after ten. That place is about seven miles or more from here across the range, fifteen or twenty by the river; I shall be back by nightfall. The cabin is your own."

He turned away without another word.

"Wait," said the woman, "I am afraid to stay here."

She had been fearless enough before in these mountains but her recent experiences had somehow unsettled her nerves.

"There is nothing on earth to hurt you, I think," returned the man. "There isn't a human being, so far as I know, in these mountains."

"Except my uncle's party."

He nodded.

"But there might be another bear," she added desperately, forcing herself.

"Not likely, and they wouldn't come here if there were any. That's the first grizzly I have seen in years," he went on unconcernedly, studiously looking away from her, not to add to her confusion at the remembrance of that awful episode which would obtrude itself on every occasion. "You can use a rifle or gun?"

She nodded; he stepped over to the wall and took down the Winchester which he handed her.

"This one is ready for service, and you will find a revolver on the shelf. There is only one possible way of access to this cabin, that's down those rock stairs; one man, one woman, a child even, with these weapons could hold it against an army."

"Couldn't I go with you?"

"On that foot?"

Enid pressed her wounded foot upon the ground; it was not so painful when resting, but she found she could not walk a step on it without great suffering.

"I might carry you part of the way," said the man. "I carried you last night, but it would be impossible, all of it."

"Promise me that you will be back by nightfall with Uncle Bob and — "

"I shall be back by nightfall, but I can't promise that I will bring anybody with me."

"You mean?"

"You saw what the cloud burst nearly did for you," was the quick answer. "If they did not get out of that pocket there is nothing left of them now."

"But they must have escaped," persisted the girl, fighting down her alarm at this blunt statement of possible peril. "Besides, Uncle Robert and most of the rest were climbing one of the peaks and — "

"They will be all right then, but if I am to find the place and tell them your story, I must go now."

He turned and without another word or a backward glance scrambled down the hill. The girl limped to the brink of the cliff over which he had plunged and stared after him. She watched him as long as she could see him until he was lost among the trees. If she had anybody else to depend upon she would certainly have felt differently toward him. When Uncle Robert and her Aunt and the children and old Kirkby and the rest surrounded her again she could hate that man in spite of all he had done for her, but now, as she

stared after him determinedly making his way down the mountain and through the trees, it was with difficulty she could restrain herself from calling him back.

The silence was most oppressive, the loneliness was frightful; she had been alone before in these mountains, but from choice; now the fact that there was no escape from them made the sensation a very different one.

She sat down and brooded over her situation until she felt that if she did not do something and in some way divert her thoughts she would break down again. He had said that the cabin and its contents were hers. She resolved to inspect them more closely. She hobbled back into the great room and looked about her again. There was nothing that demanded careful scrutiny; she wasn't quite sure whether she was within the proprieties or not, but she seized the oldest and most worn of the volumes on the shelf. It was a text book on mining and metallurgy she observed, and opening it at the fly leaf, across the page she saw written in a firm vigorous masculine hand a name, "William Berkeley Newbold," and beneath these words, "Thayer Hall, Harvard," and a date some seven years back.

The owner of that book, whether the present possessor or not, had been a college man. Say

that he had graduated at twenty-one or twenty-two, he would be twenty-eight or twenty-nine years old now, but if so, why that white hair? Perhaps though the book did not belong to the man of the cabin.

She turned to other books on the shelf. Many of them were technical books which she had sufficient general culture to realize could be only available to a man highly educated and a special student of mines and mining — a mining engineer, she decided, with a glance at those instruments and appliances of a scientific character plainly, but of whose actual use she was ignorant.

A rapid inspection of the other books confirmed her in the conclusion that the man of the mountains was indeed the owner of the collection. There were a few well worn volumes of poetry and essays. A Bible, Shakespeare, Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, Tennyson, Keats, a small dictionary, a compendious encyclopedia, just the books, she thought, smiling at her conceit, that a man of education and culture would want to have upon a desert island where his supply of literature would be limited.

The old ones were autographed as the first book she had looked in; others, newer editions to the little library if she could judge by their condition, were unsigned.

Into the corner cupboard and the drawers of course she did not look. There was nothing else in the room to attract her attention, save some piles of manuscript neatly arranged on one of the shelves, each one covered with a square of board and kept in place by pieces of glistening quartz. There were four of these piles and another half the size of the first four on the table. These of course she did not examine, further than to note that the writing was in the same bold free hand as the signature in the books. If she had been an expert she might have deduced much from the writing; as it was she fancied it was strong, direct, manly.

Having completed her inspection of this room, she opened the door and went into the other; it was smaller and less inviting. It had only one window and a door opening outside. There was a cook stove here and shelves with cooking utensils and granite ware, and more rude box receptacles on the walls which were filled with a bountiful and well selected store of canned goods and provisions of various kinds. This was evidently the kitchen, supply room, china closet. She saw no sign of a bed in it and wondered where and how the man had spent the night.

By rights her mind should have been filled with her uncle and his party and in their alarm she

should have shared, but she was so extremely comfortable, except for her foot, which did not greatly trouble her so long as she kept it quiet, that she felt a certain degree of contentment not to say happiness. The Adventure was so romantic and thrilling — save for those awful moments in the pool — especially to the soul of a conventional woman who had been brought up in the most humdrum and stereotyped fashion of the earth's ways, and with never an opportunity for the development of the spirit of romance which all of us exhibit some time in our life and which thank God some of us never lose, that she found herself reveling in it.

She lost herself in pleasing imaginations of the tales of her adventures that she could tell when she got back to her uncle and when she got further back to staid old Philadelphia. How shocked everybody would be with it all there! Of course she resolved that she would never mention one episode of that terrible day, and she had somehow absolute confidence that this man, in spite of his grim, gruff taciturnity, who had shown himself so exceedingly considerate of her feelings would never mention it either.

She had so much food for thought, that not even in the late afternoon of the long day, could she force her mind to the printed pages of the

book she had taken at random from the shelf which lay open before her, where she sat in the sun, her head covered by an old "Stetson" that she had ventured to appropriate. She had dragged a bear skin out on the rocks in the sun and sat curled up on it half reclining against a boulder watching the trail, the Winchester by her side. She had eaten so late a breakfast that she had made a rather frugal lunch out of whatever had taken her fancy in the store room, and she was waiting most anxiously now for the return of the man.

The season was late and the sun sank behind the peaks quite early in the afternoon, and it grew dark and chill long before the shadows fell upon the dwellers of the lowlands.

Enid drew the bear skin around her and waited with an ever growing apprehension. If she should be compelled to spend the night alone in that cabin, she felt that she could not endure it. She was never so glad of anything in her life as when she saw him suddenly break out of the woods and start up the steep trail, and for a moment her gladness was not tempered by the fact, which she was presently to realize with great dismay, that as he had gone, so he now returned, alone.

CHAPTER XV

THE CASTAWAYS OF THE MOUNTAINS

THE man was evidently seeking her, for so soon as he caught sight of her he broke into a run and came bounding up the steep ascent with the speed and agility of a chamois or a mountain sheep. As he approached the girl rose to her feet and supported herself upon the boulder against which she had been leaning, at the same time extending her hand to greet him.

"Oh," she cried, her voice rising nervously as he drew near, "I am so glad you are back, another hour of loneliness and I believe I should have gone crazy."

Now whether that joy in his return was for him personally or for him abstractly, he could not tell; whether she was glad that he had come back simply because he was a human being who would relieve her loneliness or whether she rejoiced to see him individually, was a matter not yet to be determined. He hoped the latter, he believed the former. At any rate he caught and held her outstretched hand in the warm clasp of both his own. Burning words of greeting rushed to his

lips torrentially, what he said, however, was quite commonplace; as is so often the case, thought and outward speech did not correspond.

"It's too cold for you out here, you must go into the house at once," he declared masterfully and she obeyed with unwonted meekness.

The sun had set and the night air had grown suddenly chill. Still holding her hand they started toward the cabin a few rods away. Her wounded foot was of little support to her and the excitement had unnerved her; in spite of his hand she swayed; without a thought he caught her about the waist and half lifted, half led her to the door. It seemed as natural as it was inevitable for him to assist her in this way and in her weakness and bewilderment she suffered it without comment or resistance. Indeed there was such strength and power in his arm, she was so secure there, that she liked it. As for him his pulses were bounding at the contact; but for that matter even to look at her quickened his heart beat.

Entering the main room he led her gently to one of the chairs near the table and immediately thereafter lighted the fire which he had taken the precaution to lay before his departure. It had been dark in the cabin, but the fire soon filled it with glorious light. She watched him at his task

and as he rose from the hearth questioned him.

"Now tell me," she began, "you found — "

"First your supper, and then the story," he answered, turning toward the door of the other room.

"No," pleaded the girl, "can't you see that nothing is of any importance to me but the story? Did you find the camp?"

"I found the place where it had been."

"Where it had been!"

"There wasn't a single vestige of it left. That whole pocket, I knew it well, had been swept clean by the flood."

"But Kirkby, and Mrs. Maitland and — "

"They weren't there."

"Did you search for them?"

"Certainly."

"But they can't have been drowned," she exclaimed piteously.

"Of course not," he began reassuringly. "Kirkby is a veteran of these mountains and — "

"But do you know him?" queried the girl in great surprise.

"I did once," said the man, flushing darkly at his admission. "I haven't seen him for five years."

So that was the measure of his isolation, thought the woman, keen for the slightest evi-

dence as to her companion's history, of which, by the way, he meant to tell her nothing.

"Well?" she asked, breaking the pause.

"Kirkby would certainly see the cloud-burst coming and he would take the people with him in the camp up on the hogback near it. It is far above the flood line, they would be quite safe there."

"And did you look for them there?"

"I did. The trail had been washed out, but I scrambled up and found undisputed evidence that my surmise was correct. I haven't a doubt that all who were in the camp were saved."

"Thank God for that," said the girl, greatly relieved and comforted by his reassuring words. "And my uncle, Mr. Robert Maitland, and the rest on the mountain, what do you think of them?"

"I am sure that they must have escaped too. I don't think any of them have suffered more than a thorough drenching in the downpour and that they are all safe and perhaps on their way to the settlements now."

"But they wouldn't go back without searching for me, would they?" cried the girl.

"Certainly not, I suppose they are searching for you now."

"Well then —"

"Wait," said the man. "You started down the cañon, you told everybody that you were going that way. They naturally searched in that direction; they hadn't the faintest idea that you were going up the river."

"No," admitted Enid, "that is true. I did not tell anyone. I didn't dream of going up the cañon when I started out in the morning; it was the result of a sudden impulse."

"God bless that—" burst out the man and then he checked himself, flushing again darkly.

What had he been about to say? The question flashed into his own mind and into the woman's mind at the same time when she heard the incompleted sentence; but she, too, checked the question that rose to her lips.

"This is the way I figure it," continued the man hurriedly to cover up his confusion. "They fancy themselves alone in these mountains, which save for me they are; they believe you to have gone down the cañon. Kirkby with Mrs. Maitland and the others waited on the ridge until Mr. Maitland and his party joined them. They couldn't have saved very much to eat or wear from the camp, they were miles from a settlement, they probably divided into two parties; the larger with the woman and children started for

home, the second went down the cañon searching for your dead body!"

"And had it not been for you," cried the girl impulsively, "they had found it."

"God permitted me to be of service to you," answered the man simply. "I can follow their speculations exactly; up or down, they believed you to have been in the cañon when the storm broke, therefore there was only one place and one direction to search for you."

"And that was?"

"Down the cañon."

"What did you do then?"

"I went down the cañon myself. I think I saw evidences that someone had preceded me, too."

"Did you overtake them!"

"Certainly not; they traveled as rapidly as I, they must have started early in the morning and they had several hours the advantage of me."

"But they must have stopped somewhere for the night and — "

"Yes," answered the man. "If I had had only myself to consider, I should have pressed on through the night and overtaken them when they camped."

"Only yourself?"

"You made me promise to return here by nightfall. I don't know whether I should have obeyed you or not. I kept on as long as I dared and still leave myself time to get back to you by dark."

She had no idea of the desperate speed he had made to reach her while it was still daylight.

"If you hadn't come when you did, I should have died," cried the girl impetuously. "You did perfectly right. I don't think I am a coward, I hope not, I never was afraid before, but — "

"Don't apologize or explain to me, it's not necessary; I understand everything you feel. It was only because I had given you my word to be back by sunset that I left off following their trail. I was afraid that you might think me dead or that something had happened and — "

"I should, I did," admitted the girl. "It wasn't so bad during the day time, but when the sun went down and you did not come I began to imagine everything. I saw myself left alone here in these mountains, helpless, wounded, without a human being to speak to. I could not bear it."

"But I have been here alone for five years," said the man grimly.

"That's different. I don't know why you have chosen solitude, but I — "

"You are a woman," returned the other gently, "and you have suffered, that accounts for everything."

"Thank you," said Enid gratefully. "And I am so glad you came back to me."

"Back to you," reiterated the man and then he stopped. If he had allowed his heart to speak he would have said, back to you from the very ends of the world — "But I want you to believe that I honestly did not leave the trail until the ultimate moment," he added.

"I do believe it," she extended her hand to him. "You have been very good to me, I trust you absolutely."

And for the second time he took that graceful, dainty, aristocratic hand in his own larger, stronger, firmer grasp. His face flushed again; under other circumstances and in other days perhaps he might have kissed that hand; as it was he only held it for a moment and then gently released it.

"And you think they are searching for me?" she asked.

"I know it. I am sure of what I myself would do for one I love — I loved I mean, and they —"

"And they will find me?"

The man shook his head.

"I am afraid they will be convinced that you

have gone down with the flood. Didn't you have a cap or — "

"Yes," said the woman, "and a sweater. The bear you shot covered the sweater with blood. I could not put it on again."

As she spoke she flushed a glorious crimson at the remembrance of that meeting, but the man was looking away with studied care. She thanked him in her heart for such generous and kindly consideration.

"They will have gone down the stream with the rest, and it's just possible that the searchers may find them, the body of the bear too. This river ends in a deep mountain lake and I think it is going to snow, it will be frozen hard tomorrow."

"And they will think me — there?"

"I am afraid so."

"And they won't come up here?"

"It is scarcely possible."

"Oh!" exclaimed the woman faintly at the dire possibility that she might not be found.

"I took an empty bottle with me," said the man, breaking the silence, "in which I had enclosed a paper saying that you were here and safe, save for your wounded foot, and giving directions how to reach the place. I built a cairn of rocks in a sheltered nook in the valley where

your camp had been pitched and left the tightly corked bottle wedged on top of it. If they return to the camp they can scarcely fail to see it."

"But if they don't go back there."

"Well, it was just a chance."

"And if they don't find me?"

"You will have to stay here for a while; until your foot gets well enough to travel," returned the man evasively.

"But winter is coming on, you said the lake would freeze to-night, and if it snows?"

"It will snow."

The woman stared at him, appalled.

"And in that case —"

"I am afraid," was the slow reply, "that you will have to stay here" — he hesitated in the face of her white still face — "all winter" he added desperately.

"Alone!" exclaimed the girl faintly. "With you?"

"Miss Maitland," said the man resolutely, "I might as well tell you the truth. I can make my way to the settlements now or later, but it will be a journey of perhaps a week. There will be no danger to me, but you will have to stay here. You could not go with me. If I am any judge you couldn't possibly use your foot for a moun-

tain journey for at least three weeks, and by that time we shall be snowed in as effectually as if we were within the Arctic Circle. But if you will let me go alone to the settlement I can bring back your uncle, and a woman to keep you company, before the trails are impassable. Or enough men to make it practicable to take you through the cañons and down the trails to your home again. I could not do that alone even if you were well, in the depth of the winter."

The girl shook her head stubbornly.

"A week alone in these mountains and I should be mad," she said decisively. "It isn't to be thought of."

"It must be thought of," urged the man. "You don't understand. It is either that or spend the winter here — with me."

The woman looked at him steadily.

"And what have I to fear from you?" she asked.

"Nothing, nothing," protested the other, "but the world?"

"The world," said the woman reflectively. "I don't mean to say that it means nothing to me, but it has cause enough for what it would fain say now." She came to her decision swiftly. "There is no help for it," she continued; "we are marooned together." She smiled

faintly as she used the old word of tropic island and southern sea. "You have shown me that you are a man and a gentleman, in God and you I put my trust. When my foot gets well, if you can teach me to walk on snow shoes and it is possible to get through the passes, we will try to go back; if not, we must wait."

"The decision is yours," said the man, "yet I feel that I ought to point out to you how —"

"I see all that you see," she interrupted. "I know what is in your mind, it is entirely clear to me, we can do nothing else."

"So be it. You need have no apprehension as to your material comfort; I have lived in these mountains for a long time, I am prepared for any emergency, I pass my time in the summer getting ready for the winter. There is a cave, or recess rather, behind the house which, as you see, is built against the rock wall, and it is filled with wood enough to keep us warm for two or three winters; I have an ample supply of provisions and clothing for my own needs, but you will need something warmer than that you wear," he continued.

"Have you needle and thread and cloth?" she asked.

"Everything," was the prompt answer.

"Then I shall not suffer."

"Are you that wonder of wonders," asked the man, smiling slightly, "an educated woman who knows how to sew?"

"It is a tradition of Philadelphia," answered the girl, "that her daughters should be expert needlewomen."

"Oh, you are from Philadelphia."

"Yes, and you?"

She threw the question at him so deftly and so quickly that she caught him unaware and off his guard a second time within the hour.

"Baltimore," he answered before he thought and then bit his lip.

He had determined to vouchsafe her no information regarding himself and here she had surprised him into an admission in the first blush of their acquaintance, and she knew that she had triumphed for she smiled in recognition of it.

She tried another tack.

"Mr. Newbold," she began at a venture, and as it was five years since he had heard that name, his surprise at her knowledge, which after all was very simple, betrayed him a third time. "We are like stories I have read, people who have been cast away on desert islands and —"

"Yes," said the man, "but no castaways that I have ever read of have been so bountifully pro-

vided with everything necessary to the comfort of life as we are. I told you I lacked nothing for your material welfare, and even your mind need not stagnate."

"I have looked at your books already," said the woman, answering his glance.

This was where she had found his name he realized.

"You will have this room for your own use and I will take the other for mine," he continued.

"I am loath to dispossess you."

"I shall be quite comfortable there, and this shall be your room exclusively except when you bid me enter, as when I bring you your meals; otherwise I shall hold it inviolate."

"But," said the woman, "there must be an equal division of labor, I must do my share."

"There isn't much to do in the winter, except to take care of the burros, keep up the fire and prepare what we have to eat."

"I am afraid I should be unequal to outdoor work, but in the rest I must do my part."

He recognized at once that idleness would be irksome.

"So you shall," he assented heartily, "when your foot is well enough to make you an efficient member of our little society."

"Thank you, and now —"

"Is there anything else before I get supper?"

"You think there is no hope of their searching for me here?"

The man shook his head.

"If James Armstrong had been in the party," she said reflectively, "I am sure he would never have given up."

"And who is James Armstrong, may I ask?" burst forth the other bluntly.

"Why he — I — he is a friend of my uncle's and an — acquaintance of my own."

"Oh," said the man shortly and gloomily, as he turned away.

Enid Maitland had been very brave in his presence, but when he went out she put her head down on her arms on the table and cried softly to herself. Was ever a woman in such a predicament, thrown into the arms of a man who had established every conceivable claim upon her gratitude, forced to live with him shut up in a two-room log cabin upon a lonely mountain range, surrounded by lofty and inaccessible peaks, pierced by terrific gorges soon to be impassable from the snows? She had read many stories of castaways from Charles Reade's famous "Foul Play" down to more modern instances, but in those cases there had always been an island comparatively large over which to range, with pri-

vacy, seclusion, opportunity for withdrawal; bright heavens, balmy breezes, idyllic conditions. Here were two uplifted from the earth upon a sky-piercing mountain; they would have had more range of action and more liberty of motion if they had been upon a derelict in the ocean.

And she realized at the same time that in all those stories the two castaways always loved each other. Would it be so with them? Was it so! And again the hot flame within outvied the fire on the hearth as the blood rushed to the smooth surface of her cheek again.

What would her father say if he could know her position, what would the world say, and above all what would Armstrong say? It cannot be denied that her thoughts were terribly and overwhelmingly dismayed, and yet that despair was not without a certain relief. No man had ever so interested her as this one. What was the mystery of his life, why was he there, what had he meant when he had blessed the idle impulse that had sent her into his arms?

Her heart throbbed again. She lifted her face from her hands and dried her tears, a warm glow stole over her and once again not altogether from the fire. Who and what was this man? Who was that woman whose picture he had taken from her? Well, she would have time to find

out. And meantime the world outside could think and do what it pleased. She sat staring into the firelight, seeing pictures there, dreaming dreams. She was as lovely as an angel to the man when he came back into the room.

BOOK IV.

OH YE ICE AND SNOW, PRAISE YE THE LORD.

CHAPTER XVI

THE WOMAN'S HEART

THAT upper earth on which they lived was covered with a thick blanket of snow. The lakes and pools were frozen from shore to shore. The mountain brooks, if they flowed at all, ran under thick arches of ice. The deepest cañons were well nigh impassable from huge drifts that sometimes almost rose level with the tops of the walls. In every sheltered spot great banks of white were massed. The spreading branches of the tall pine trees in the valleys drooped under heavy burdens of snow. Only here and there sharp gaunt peaks were swept clean by the fierce winter winds and thrust themselves upward in the icy air, naked and bare. The cold was polar in its bitter intensity.

The little shelf, or plateau, jutting out from the mountain side upon which the lonely cabin stood was sheltered from the prevailing winds, but the house itself was almost covered with the drifts. The constant fire roaring up the huge stone chimney had melted some of the snow at the top and it had run down the slanting roof and formed huge

icicles on what had been the eaves of the house. The man had cut away the drifts from doors and windows for light and liberty. At first every stormy night would fill his laborious clearings with drifting snow, but as it became packed down and frozen solid he was able to keep his various ways open without a great deal of difficulty. A little work every morning and evening sufficed.

Every day he had to go down the mountain stairway to the bottom of the pocket to feed and water the burros. What was a quick and simple task in milder, warmer seasons, sometimes took him half a day under the present rigorous conditions. And the woman never saw him start out in the storm without a sinking heart and grave apprehension. On his return to the cabin half frozen, almost spent and exhausted, she ever welcomed him with eager gratitude and satisfaction which would shine in her eyes, throb in her heart and tremble upon her lips, control it as she might. And he thought it was well worth all the trouble and hardships of his task to be so greeted when he came back to her.

Winter had set in unusually early and with unprecedented severity. Any kind of winter in the mountains would have amazed the girl, but even the man with his larger experiences declared he had never before known such sharp and sudden

cold, or such deep and lasting snow. His daily records had never shown such low temperatures, nor had his observation ever noted such wild and furious storms as raged then and there. It seemed as if Nature were in a conspiracy to seal up the mountains and all they contained, to make ingress and egress alike impossible.

A month had elapsed and Enid's foot was now quite well. The man had manged to sew up her boot where his knife had cut it, and although the job was a clumsy one the result was a usable shoe. It is astonishing the comfort she took when she first put it on and discarded for good the shapeless woolen stocking which had covered the clumsy bandage, happily no longer necessary. Although the torn and bruised member had healed and she could use it with care, her foot was still very tender and capable of sustaining no violent or long continued strain. Of necessity she had been largely confined to the house, but whenever it had been possible he had wrapped her in his great bear skin coat and had helped her out to the edge of the cliff for a breath of fresh air.

Sometimes he would leave her there alone, would perhaps have left her alone there always had she not imperiously required his company.

Insensibly she had acquired the habit — not a difficult one for a woman to fall into — of taking

the lead in the small affairs of their circumscribed existence, and he had acquiesced in her dominance without hesitation or remonstrance. It was she who ordered their daily walk and conversation. Her wishes were consulted about everything; to be sure no great range of choice was allowed them, or liberty of action, or freedom, in the constraints with which nature bound them, but whenever there was any selection she made it.

The man yielded everything to her and yet he did it without in any way derogating from his self respect or without surrendering his natural independence. The woman instinctively realized that in any great crisis, in any large matter, the determination of which would naturally affect their present or their future, their happiness, welfare, life, he would assert himself, and his assertion would be unquestioned and unquestionable by her.

There was a delightful satisfaction to the woman in the whole situation. She had a woman's desire to lead in the smaller things of life and yet craved the woman's consciousness that in the great emergencies she would be led, in the great battles she would be fought for, in the great dangers she would be protected, in the great perils she would be saved. There was rest, comfort, joy and satisfaction in these thoughts.

The strength of the man she mastered was evidence of her own power and charm. There was a sweet, voiceless, unconscious flattery in his deference of which she could not be unaware.

Having little else to do, she studied the man and she studied him with a warm desire and an enthusiastic predisposition to find the best in him. She would not have been a human girl if she had not been thrilled to the very heart of her by what the man had done for her. She recognized that whether he asserted it or not, he had established an everlasting and indisputable claim upon her.

The circumstances of their first meeting, which as the days passed did not seem quite so horrible to her, and yet a thought of which would bring the blood to her cheek still on the instant, had in some way turned her over to him. His consideration of her, his gracious tenderness toward her, his absolute abnegation, his evident overwhelming desire to please her, to make the anomalous situation in which they stood to each other bearable in spite of their lonely and unobserved intimacy, by an absolute lack of presumption on his part — all those things touched her profoundly.

Although she did not recognize the fact then, perhaps, she loved him from the moment her eyes had opened in the mist and rain after that awful

battle in the torrent to see him bending over her.

No sight that had ever met Enid Maitland's eyes was so glorious, so awe inspiring, so uplifting and magnificent as the view from the verge of the cliff in the sunlight of some bright winter morning. Few women had ever enjoyed such privileges as hers. She did not know whether she liked the winter crowned range best that way, or whether she preferred the snowy world, glittering cold in the moonlight; or even whether it was more attractive when it was dark and the peaks and drifts were only lighted by the stars which shone never so brightly as just above her head.

When he allowed her she loved to stand sometimes in the full fury of the gale with the wind shrieking and sobbing, like lost souls in some icy inferno, through the hills and over the pines, the snow beating upon her, the sleet cutting her face if she dared to turn toward the storm. Generally he left her alone in the quieter moments, but in the tempest he stood watchful, on guard by her side, buttressing her, protecting her, sheltering her. Indeed, his presence then was necessary; without him she could scarce have maintained a footing. The force of the wind might have hurled her down the mountain but for his strong arm.

When the cold grew too great he led her back carefully to the hut and the warm fire.

Ah, yes, life and the world were both beautiful to her then, in night, in day, by sunlight, by moonlight, in calm and storm. Yet it made no difference what was spread before the woman's eyes, what glorious picture was exhibited to her gaze, she could not look at it more than a moment without thinking of the man. With the most fascinating panorama that the earth's surface could spread before human vision to engage her attention she looked into her own heart and saw there this man!

Oh, she had fought against it at first, but lately she had luxuriated in it. She loved him, she loved him! And why not? What is it that women love in men? Strength of body? She could remember yet how he had carried her over the mountains in the midst of the storm, how she had been so bravely upborne by his arms to his heart. She realized later what a task that had been, what a feat of strength. The uprooting of that sapling, and the overturning of that huge grizzly were child's play to the long portage up the almost impassable cañon and mountain side which had brought her to this dear haven.

Was it strength of character she sought, resolution, determination? This man had deliber-

ately withdrawn from the world, buried himself in this mountain; and had stayed there deaf to the alluring call of man or woman; he had had the courage to do that.

Was it strength of mind she admired? Enid Maitland was no mean judge of the mental powers of her acquaintance. She was just as full of life and spirit and the joy of them as any young woman should be, but she had not been trained by and thrown with the best for nothing. *Noblesse oblige!* That his was a mind well stored with knowledge of the most varied sort she easily and at once perceived. Of course the popular books of the last five years had passed him by, and of such he knew nothing, but he could talk intelligently, interestingly, entertainingly upon the great classics. Keats and Shakespeare were his most thumbed volumes. He had graduated from Harvard as a Civil Engineer with the highest honors of his class and school and the youngest man to get his sheepskin! Enid Maitland herself was a woman of broad culture and wide reading and she deliberately set herself to fathom this man's capabilities. Not infrequently, much to her surprise, sometimes to her dismay, but generally to her satisfaction, she found that she had no plummet with which to sound his greater depths.

Did she seek in him that fine flower of good breeding, gentleness and consideration? Where could she find these qualities better displayed? She was absolutely alone with this man, entirely in his power, shut off from the world and its interference as effectually as if they had both been abandoned on an ice floe at the North Pole or cast away on some lonely island in the South Seas, yet she felt as safe as if she had been in her own house, or her uncle's, with every protection that human power could give. He had never presumed upon the situation in the least degree, he never once referred to the circumstances of their meeting in the remotest way, he never even discussed her rescue from the flood, he never told her how he had borne her through the rain to the lonely shelter of the hills, and in no way did he say anything that the most keenly scrutinizing mind would torture into an allusion to the pool and the bear and the woman. The fineness of his breeding was never so well exhibited as in this reticence. More often than not it is what he does not rather than what he does that indicates the man.

It would be folly to deny that he never thought of these things. Had he forgotten them there would be no merit in his silence; but to remember them and to keep still — aye, that showed the

man! He would close his eyes in that little room on the other side of the door and see again the dark pool, her white shoulders, her graceful arms, the lovely face with its crown of sunny hair rising above the rushing water. He had listened to the roar of the wind through the long nights, when she thought him asleep if she thought of him at all, and heard again the scream of the storm that had brought her to his arms. No snow drop that touched his cheek when he was abroad but reminded him of that night in the cold rain when he had held her close and carried her on. He could not sit and mend her boot without remembering that white foot before which he would fain have prostrated himself and upon which he would have pressed passionate kisses if he had given way to his desires. But he kept all these things in his heart, pondered them and made no sign.

Did she ask beauty in her lover? Ah, there at last he failed. According to the canons of perfection he did not measure up to the standard. His features were irregular, his chin a trifle too square, his mouth a thought too firm, his brow wrinkled a little; but he was good to look at, for he looked strong, he looked clean and he looked true. There was about him, too, that stamp of practical efficiency that men who can do things

always have. You looked at him and you felt sure that what he undertook, that he would accomplish; that decision and capability were incarnate in him.

But after all the things are said, love goes where it is sent, and I, at least, am not the sender. This woman loved this man neither because nor in spite of these qualities. That they were might account for her affection, but if they had not been, it may be that that affection, that that passion, would have sprung up in her heart still. No one can say, no one can tell how or why those things are. She had loved him while she raged against him and hated him. She did neither the one nor the other of those two last things, now, and she loved him the more.

Mystery is a great mover, there is nothing so attractive as a problem we cannot solve. The very situation of the man, how he came there, what he did there, why he remained there, questions to which she had yet no answer, stimulated her profoundly. Because she did not know she questioned in secret; interest was aroused and the transition to love was easy.

Propinquity, too, is responsible for many an affection. "The ivy clings to the first met tree." Given a man and woman heart free and throw them together and let there be decent kindness

on both sides, and it is almost inevitable that each shall love the other. Isolate them from the world, let them see no other companions but the one man and the one woman and the result becomes more inevitable.

Yes, this woman loved this man. She said in her heart — and I am not one to dispute her conclusions — that she would have loved him had he been one among millions to stand before her, and it was true. He was the complement of her nature. They differed in temperament as much as in complexion, and yet in such differences as must always be to make perfect love and perfect union, there were striking resemblances, necessary points of contact.

There was no reason whatever why Enid Maitland should not love this man. The only possible check upon her feelings would have been her rather anomalous relation to Armstrong, but she reflected that she had promised him definitely nothing. When she had met him she had been heart whole, he had made some impression upon her fancy and might have made more with greater opportunity, but unfortunately for him, luckily for her, he had not enjoyed that privilege. She scarcely thought of him longer.

She would not have been human if her mind had not dwelt upon the world beyond the skyline on the other side of the range. She knew

how those who loved her must be suffering on account of her disappearance, but knowing herself safe and realizing that within a short time, when the spring came again, she would go back to them and that their mourning would be turned into joy by her arrival, she could not concern herself very greatly over their present feelings and emotions; and besides, what would be the use of worrying over those things. There was subject more attractive for her thoughts close at hand. And she was too blissfully happy to entertain for more than a moment any sorrow.

She pictured her return and never by any chance did she think of going back to civilization alone. The man she loved would be by her side, the church's blessing would make them one. To do her justice in the simplicity and purity of her thoughts she never once thought of what the world might say about that long winter sojourn alone with this man. She was so conscious of her own innocence and of his delicate forbearance, she never once thought how humanity would elevate its brows and fairly cry upon her from the house tops. She did not realize that were she ever so pure and so innocent she could not now or ever reach the high position which Cæsar, who was none too reputable himself, would fain have had his wife enjoy?

CHAPTER XVII

THE MAN'S HEART

Now love produces both happiness and unhappiness, dependent upon conditions, but on the whole I think the happiness predominates, for love itself if it be true and high is its own reward. Love may feel itself unworthy and may shrink even from the unlatching of the shoe lace of the beloved, yet it joys in its own existence nevertheless. Of course its greatest satisfaction is in the return, but there is a sweetness even in the despair of the truly loving.

Enid Maitland, however, did not have to endure indifference, or fight against a passion which met with no response, for this man loved her with a love that was greater even than her own. The moon, in the trite aphorism, looks on many brooks, the brook sees no moon but the one above him in the heavens. In one sense his merit in winning her affection for himself from the hundreds of men she knew was the greater; in many years he had only seen this one woman. Naturally she should be everything to him. She represented to him not only the woman but womankind. He

had been a boy practically when he had buried himself in those mountains, and in all that time he had seen nobody like Enid Maitland. Every argument which has been exploited to show why she should love him could be turned about to account for his passion for her. Those arguments are not necessary, they are all supererogatory, like idle words. To him also love had been born in an hour. It had flashed into existence as if from the fiat of the Divine.

Oh, he had fought against it. Like the eremites of old he had been scourged into the desert by remorse and another passion, but time had done its work. The woman he first loved had ministered not to the spiritual side of the man, or if she had so ministered in any degree it was because he had looked at her with a glamour of inexperience and youth. During those five years of solitude, of study and of reflection, the truth had gradually unrolled itself before him. Conclusions vastly at variance with what he had ever believed possible as to the woman upon whom he had first bestowed his heart had got into his being and were in solution there, this present woman was the precipitant which brought them to life. He knew now what the old appeal of his wife had been. He knew now what the new appeal of this woman was.

In humanity two things in life are inextricably intermingled, body and soul. Where the function of one begins and the function of the other ends no one is able to say. In all human passions there are admixtures of the earth earthy. We are born the sons of the Old Adam as we are re-born the sons of the New. Passions are complex. As in harvest wheat and tares grow together until the end, so in love earth and heaven mingle ever. He remembered a clause from an ancient marriage service he had read. "With my body I thee worship," and with every fiber of his physical being, he loved this woman.

It would be idle to deny that, impossible to disguise the facts, but in the melting pot of passion the preponderant ingredients were mental and spiritual; and just because higher and holier things predominated, he held her in his heart a sacred thing. Love is like a rose: the material part is the beautiful blossom, the spiritual factor is the fragrance which abides in the rose jar even after every leaf has faded away, or which may be expressed from the soft petals by the hard circumstances of pain and sorrow until there is left nothing but the lingering perfume of the flower.

His body trembled if she laid a hand upon him, his soul thirsted for her; present or absent he conjured before his tortured brain the sweetness

that inhabited her breast. He had been clear-sighted enough in analyzing the past, he was neither clear-sighted nor coherent in thinking of the present. He worshiped her, he could have thrown himself upon his knees to her; if it would have added to her happiness she could have killed him, smiling at her. Rode she in the Juggernaut car of the ancient idol, with his body would he have unhesitatingly paved the way and have been glad of the privilege. He longed to compass her with sweet observances. The world revenged itself upon him for his long neglect, it had summed up in this one woman all its charm, its beauty, its romance, and had thrust her into his very arms. His was one of those great passions which illuminate the records of the past. Paolo had not loved Francesca more.

Oh, yes, the woman knew he loved her. It was not in the power of mortal man, no matter how iron his restraint, how absolute the imposition of his will, to keep his heart hidden, his passion undisclosed. No one could keep such things secret. His love for her cried aloud in a thousand ways: even his look when he dared to turn his eyes upon her was eloquent of his feeling. He never said a word, however; he held his lips at least fettered and bound for he believed that honor and its obligations weighed down the bal-

ance upon the contrary side to which his inclinations lay.

He was not worthy of this woman. In the first place all he had to offer her was a blood-stained hand. That might have been overcome in his mind; but pride in his self-punishment, his resolution to withdraw himself from man and woman until such time as God completed his expiation and signified His acceptance of the penitent by taking away his life, held him inexorably.

The dark face of his wife rose before him. He forced himself to think upon her; she had loved him, she had given him all that she could. He remembered how she had pleaded with him that he take her on that last and most dangerous of journeys, her devotion to him had been so great she could not let him go out of her sight a moment, he thought fatuously! And he had killed her. In the queer turmoil of his brain he blamed himself for everything. He could not be false to his purpose, false to her memory, unworthy of the passion in which he believed she had held him and which he believed he had inspired.

If he had gone out in the world, after her death, he might have forgotten most of these things, he might have lived them down. Saner, clearer views would have come to him. His morbid self-reproach and self-consciousness would have been

changed. But he had lived with them alone for five years and now there was no putting them aside. Honor and pride, the only things that may successfully fight against love, overcame him. He could not give way. He wanted to, every time he was in her presence he longed to, sweep her to his heart and crush her in his arms and bend her head back and press kisses of fire on her lips.

But honor and pride held him back. How long would they continue to exercise dominion over him? Would the time come when his passion rising like a sea would thunder upon these artificial embankments of his soul, beat them down and sweep them away?

At first the disparity between their situations, not so much on account of family or of property — the treasures of the mountains, hidden since creation, he had discovered and let lie — but because of the youth and position of the woman compared to his own maturer years, his desperate experience, and his social withdrawal, had reinforced his determination to live and love without a sign. But he had long since got beyond this. Had he been free he would have taken her like a viking of old, if he had to pluck her from amid a thousand swords and carry her to a beggar's hut which love would have turned

to a palace. And she would have come with him on the same conditions.

He did not know that. Women have learned through centuries of weakness that fine art of concealment which man has never mastered. She never let him see what she thought of him. Yet he was not without suspicion; if that suspicion grew to certainty, would he control himself then?

At first he had sought to keep out of her way, but she had compelled him to come in. The room that was kitchen and bedroom and storeroom for him was cheerless and somewhat cold. Save at night or when he was busy with other tasks outside they lived together in the great room. It was always warm, it was always bright, it was always cheerful, there.

The little piles of manuscript she had noted were books he had written. He made no effort to conceal such things from her. He talked frankly enough about his life in the hills, indeed there was no possibility of avoiding the discussion of such topics. On but two subjects was he inexorably silent. One was the present state of his affections and the other was the why and wherefore of his lonely life. She knew beyond peradventure that he loved her, but she had no faint suspicion even as to the reason why he had

become a recluse. He had never given her the slightest clew to his past save that admission that he had known Kirkby, which was in itself nothing definite and which she never connected with that package of letters which she still kept with her.

The man's mind was too active and fertile to be satisfied with manual labor alone, the books that he had written were scientific treatises in the main. One was a learned discussion of the fauna and flora of the mountains. Another was an exhaustive account of the mineral resources and geological formations of the range. He had only to allow a whisper, a suspicion of his discovery of gold and silver in the mountains to escape him and the cañons and crests alike would be filled with eager prospectors. Still a third work was a scientific analysis of the water powers in the cañons.

He had willingly allowed her to read them all. Much of them she found technical and, aside from the fact that he had written them, uninteresting. But there was one book remaining in which he simply discussed the mountains in the various seasons of the year; when the snows covered them, when the grass and the moss came again, when the flowers bloomed, when autumn touched the trees. There was the soul of the man, poetry expressed in prose, man-like but

none the less poetry for that. This book she pored over, she questioned him about it, they discussed it as they discussed Keats and the other poets.

Those were happy evenings. She on one side of the fire sewing, her finger wound with cloth to hold his giant thimble, fashioning for herself some winter garments out of a gay colored, red, white and black ancient and exquisitely woven Navajo blanket, soft and pliable almost as an old fashioned piece of satin — priceless if she had but known it — which he put at her disposal. While on the other side of the same homely blaze he made her out of the skins of some of the animals that he had killed, shapeless foot coverings, half moccasin and wholly legging, which she could wear over her shoes in her short excursions around the plateau and which would keep her feet warm and comfortable.

By her permission he smoked as he worked, enjoying the hour, putting aside the past and the future and for a few moments blissfully content. Sometimes he laid aside his pipe and whatever work he was engaged upon and read to her from some immortal noble number. Sometimes the entertainment fell to her and she sang to him in her glorious contralto voice, music that made him mad. Once he could stand it no longer. At the

end of a burst of song which filled the little room — he had risen to his feet while she sang, compelled to the erect position by the magnificent melody — as the last notes died away and she smiled at him, triumphant and expectant of his praise and his approval, he hurled himself out of the room and into the night; wrestling for hours with the storm which after all was but a trifle to that which raged in his bosom. While she, left alone and deserted, quaked within the silent room till she heard him come back.

Often and often when she slept quietly on one side the thin partition, he lay awake on the other, and sometimes his passion drove him forth to cool the fever, the fire in his soul, in the icy, wintry air. The struggle within him preyed upon him, the keen loving eye of the woman searched his face, scrutinized him, looked into his heart, saw what was there.

She determined to end it, deciding that he must confess his affections. She had no premonition of the truth and no consideration of any evil consequences held her back. She could give free range to her love and her devotion. She had the ordering of their lives and she had the power to end the situation growing more and more impossible. She fancied the matter easily terminable. She thought she had only to let him see her heart

in such ways as a maiden may, to bring joy to his own, to make him speak. She did not dream of the reality.

One night, therefore, a month or more after she had come, she resolved to end the uncertainty. She believed the easiest and the quickest way would be to get him to tell her why he was there. She naturally surmised that the woman of the picture, which she had never seen since the first day of her arrival, was in some measure the cause of it; and the only pain she had in the situation was the keen jealousy that would obtrude itself at the thought of that woman. She remembered everything that he had said to her and she recalled that he had once made the remark that he would treat her as he would have his wife treated if he had one; therefore whoever and whatever the picture of this woman was, she was not his wife. She might have been someone he had loved, who had not loved him. She might have died. She was jealous of her, but she did not fear her.

After a long and painful effort the woman had completed the winter suit she had made for herself. He had advised her and had helped her. It was a belted tunic that fell to her knees, the red and black stripes ran around it, edged the broad collar, cuffed the warm sleeves and marked

the graceful waist line. It was excessively becoming to her. He had been down into the valley, or the pocket, for a final inspection of the burros before the night, which promised to be severe, fell, and she had taken advantage of the opportunity to put it on.

She knew that she was beautiful; her determination to make this evening count had brought an unusual color to her cheeks, an unwonted sparkle to her eye. She stood up as she heard him enter the other room, she was standing erect as he came through the door and faced her. He had only seen her in the now somewhat shabby blue of her ordinary camp dress before, and her beauty fairly smote him in his face. He stood before her, wrapped in his great fur coat, snow and ice clinging to it, entranced. The woman smiled at the effect she produced.

"Take off your coat," she said gently, approaching him. "Here, let me help you. Do you realize that I have been here over a month now? I want to have a little talk with you. I want you to tell me something."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE KISS ON THE HAND

"DID it ever occur to you," began Enid Maitland gravely enough, for she quite realized the serious nature of the impending conversation, "did it ever occur to you that you know practically all, about me, while I know practically nothing about you?"

The man bowed his head.

"You may have fancied that I was not aware of it, but in one way or another you have possessed yourself of pretty nearly all of my short and, until I met you, most uneventful life," she continued.

Newbold might have answered that there was one subject which had been casually introduced by her upon one occasion and to which she had never again referred, but which was to him the most important of all subjects connected with her; and that was the nature of her relationship to one James Armstrong whose name, although he had heard it but once, he had not forgotten. The girl had been frankness itself in following his deft leads when he talked with her about her-

self, but she had shown the same reticence in recurring to Armstrong that he had displayed in questioning her about him. The statement she had just made as to his acquaintance with her history was therefore sufficiently near the truth to pass unchallenged and once again he gravely bowed in acquiescence.

"I have withheld nothing from you," went on the girl; "whatever you wanted to know, I have told you. I had nothing to conceal, as you have found out. Why you wanted to know about me, I am not quite sure."

"It was because —" burst out the man impetuously, and then he stopped abruptly and just in time.

Enid Maitland smiled at him in a way that indicated she knew what was behind the sudden check he had imposed upon himself.

"Whatever your reason, your curiosity —"

"Don't call it that, please."

"Your desire, then, has been gratified. Now it is my turn. I am not even sure about your name. I have seen it in these books and naturally I have imagined that it is yours."

"It is mine."

"Well, that is really all that I know about you. And now I shall be quite frank. I want to know more. You evidently have something

to conceal or you would not be living here in this way. I have never asked you about yourself, or manifested the least curiosity to solve the problem you present, to find the solution of the mystery of your life."

"Perhaps," said the man, "you didn't care enough about it to take the trouble to inquire."

"You know," answered the girl, "that is not true. I have been consumed with desire to know?"

"A woman's curiosity?"

"Not that," was the soft answer that turned away his wrath.

She was indeed frank. There was that in her way of uttering those two simple words that set his pulses bounding. He was not altogether and absolutely blind.

"Come," said the girl, extending her hand to him, "we are alone here together. We must help each other. You have helped me, you have been of the greatest service to me. I can't begin to count all that you have done for me; my gratitude —"

"Only that?"

"But that is all that you have ever asked or expected," answered the young woman in a low voice, whose gentle tones did not at all accord with the boldness and courage of the speech.

"You mean?" asked the man, staring at her, his face aflame.

"I mean," answered the girl swiftly, willfully misinterpreting and turning his half-spoken question another way, "I mean that I am sure that some trouble has brought you here. I do not wish to force your confidence — I have no right to do so — yet I should like to enjoy it. Can't you give it to me? I want to help you. I want to do my best to make some return for what you have been to me and have done for me."

"I ask but one thing," he said quickly.

"And what is that?"

But again he checked himself.

"No," he said, "I am not free to ask anything of you."

And that answer to Enid Maitland was like a knife thrust in the heart. The two had been standing, confronting each other. Her heart grew faint within her. She stretched out her hand vaguely, as if for support. He stepped toward her, but before he reached her she caught the back of the chair and sank down weakly. That he should be bound and not free, had never once occurred to her. She had quite misinterpreted the meaning of his remark.

The man did not help her; he could not help her. He just stood and looked at her. She

fought valiantly for self-control a moment or two and then utterly oblivious to the betrayal of her feelings involved in the question — the moments were too great for consideration of such trivial matters — she faltered:

"You mean there is some other woman?"

He shook his head in negation.

"I don't understand."

"There was some other woman?"

"Where is she now?"

"Dead."

"But you said you were not free."

He nodded.

"Did you care so much for her that now — that now —"

"Enid," he cried desperately. "Believe me, I never knew what love was until I met you."

The secret was out now, it had been known to her long since, but now it was publicly proclaimed. Even a man as blind, as obsessed, as he could not mistake the joy that illuminated her face at this announcement. That very joy and satisfaction produced upon him, however, a very different effect than might have been anticipated. Had he been free indeed he would have swept her to his breast and covered her sweet face with kisses broken by whispered words of passionate endearment. Instead of that he shrank back from her

and it was she who was forced to take up the burden of the conversation.

"You say that she is dead," she began in sweet appealing bewilderment, "and that you care so much for me and yet you —"

"I am a murderer," he broke out harshly. "There is blood upon my hands, the blood of a woman who loved me and whom, boy as I was, I thought that I loved. She was my wife, I killed her."

"Great Heaven!" cried the girl, amazed beyond measure or expectation by this sudden avowal which she had never once suspected, and her hand instinctively went to the bosom of her dress where she kept that soiled, water-stained packet of letters, "are you that man?"

"I am that man that did that thing, but what do you know?" he asked quickly, amazed in his turn.

"Old Kirkby, my uncle Robert Maitland, told me your story. They said that you had disappeared from the haunts of men —"

"And they were right. What else was there for me to do? Although innocent of crime, I was blood guilty. I was mad. No punishment could be visited upon me like that imposed by the stern, awful, appalling fact. I swore to prison myself, to have nothing more forever to do with mankind

or womankind with whom I was unworthy to associate, to live alone until God took me. To cherish my memories, to make such expiation as I could, to pray daily for forgiveness. I came here to the wildest, the most inaccessible, the loneliest, spot in the range. No one ever would come here I fancied, no one ever did come here but you. I was happy after a fashion, or at least content. I had chosen the better part. I had work, I could read, write, remember and dream. But you came and since that time life has been heaven and hell. Heaven because I love you, hell because to love you means disloyalty to the past, to a woman who loved me. Heaven because you are here, I can hear your voice, I can see you, your soul is spread out before me in its sweetness, in its purity; hell because I am false to my determination, to my vow, to the love of the past."

"And did you love her so much, then?" asked the girl, now fiercely jealous and forgetful of other things for the moment.

"It's not that," said the man. "I was not much more than a boy, a year or two out of college. I had been in the mountains a year. This woman lived in a mining camp, she was a fresh, clean, healthy girl, her father died and the whole camp fathered her, looked after her, and all the young men in the range for miles on either side

were in love with her. I supposed that I was, too, and — well, I won her from the others. We had been married but a few months and a part of the time my business as a mining engineer had called me away from her. I can remember the day before we started on the last journey. I was going alone again, but she was so unhappy over my departure, she clung to me, pleaded with me, implored me to take her with me, insisted on going wherever I went, would not be left behind. She couldn't bear me out of her sight, it seemed. I don't know what there was in me to have inspired such devotion, but I must speak the truth, however it may sound. She seemed wild, crazy about me. I didn't understand it; frankly, I didn't know what such love was — then — but I took her along. Shall I not be honest with you? In spite of the attraction physical, I had begun to feel even then that she was not the mate for me. I don't deserve it, and it shames me to say it of course, but I wanted a better mind, a higher soul. That made it harder — what I had to do, you know."

"Yes, I know."

"The only thing I could do when I came to my senses was to sacrifice myself to her memory because she had loved me so; as it were, she gave up her life for me, I could do no less than be true

and loyal to the remembrance. It wasn't a sacrifice either until you came, but as soon as you opened your eyes and looked into mine in the rain and the storm upon the rock to which I had carried you after I had fought for you, I knew that I loved you. I knew that the love that had come into my heart was the love of which I had dreamed, that everything that had gone before was nothing, that I had found the one woman whose soul should mate with mine."

"And this before I had said a word to you?"

"What are words? The heart speaks to the heart, the soul whispers to the soul. And so it was with us. I had fought for you, you were mine, mine. My heart sang it as I panted and struggled over the rocks carrying you. It said the words again and again as I laid you down here in this cabin. It repeated them over and over; mine, mine! It says that every day and hour. And yet honor and fidelity bid me stay. I am free, yet bound; free to love you, but not to take you. My heart says yes, my conscience no. I should despise myself if I were false to the love which my wife bore me, and how could I offer you a blood stained hand?"

He had drawn very near her while he spoke; she had risen again and the two confronted each other. He stretched out his hand as he asked

that last question, almost as if he had offered it to her. She made the best answer possible to his demand, for before he could divine what she would be at, she had seized his hand and kissed it, and this time it was the man whose knees gave way. He sank down in the chair and buried his face in his hands.

"Oh, God! Oh, God!" he cried in his humiliation and shame. "If I had only met you first, or if my wife had died as others die, and not by my hand in that awful hour. I can see her now, broken, bruised, bleeding, torn. I can hear the report of that weapon. Her last glance at me in the midst of her indescribable agony was one of thankfulness and gratitude. I can't stand it, I am unworthy even of her."

"But you could not help it, it was not your fault. And you can't help — caring — for me —"

"I ought to help it, I ought not love you, I ought to have known that I was not fit to love any woman, that I had no right, that I was pledged like a monk to the past. I have been weak, a fool. I love you and my honor goes, I love you and my self respect goes, I love you and my pride goes. Would God I could say I love you and my life goes and end it all." He stared at her a little space. "There is only one ray of satisfac-

tion in it at all, one gleam of comfort," he added.

"And what is that?"

"You don't know what the suffering is, you don't understand, you don't comprehend."

"And why not?"

"Because you do not love me."

"But I do," said the woman quite simply, as if it were a matter of course not only that she should love him, but that she should also tell him so.

The man stared at her, amazed. Such fierce surges of joy throbbed through him as he had not thought the human frame could sustain. This woman loved him, in some strange way he had gained her affection. It was impossible, yet she had said so! He had been a blind fool. He could see that now. She stood before him and smiled up at him, looking at him through eyes misted with tears, with lips parted, with color coming and going in her cheek and with her bosom rising and falling. She loved him, he had but to step nearer to her to take her in his arms. There was trust, devotion, surrender, everything, in her attitude and between them, like that great gulf which lay between the rich man and the beggar, that separated heaven and hell, was that he could not cross.

"I never dreamed, I never hoped — oh," he

exclaimed as if he had got his death wound, "this cannot be borne."

He turned away, but in two swift steps she caught him.

"Where do you go?"

"Out, out into the night."

"You cannot go now, it is dark; hark to the storm, you will miss your footing; you would fall, you would freeze, you would die."

"What matters that?"

"I cannot have it."

"It would be better so."

He strove again to wrench himself away, but she would not be denied. She clung to him tenaciously.

"I will not let you go unless you give me your word of honor that you will not leave the plateau, and that you will come back to me."

"I tell you that the quicker and more surely I go out of your life, the happier and better it will be for you."

"And I tell you," said the woman resolutely, "that you can never go out of my life again, living or dead," she released him with one hand and laid it upon her heart, "you are here."

"Enid," cried the man.

"No," she thrust him gently away with one hand yet detained him with the other — that was

emblematic of the situation between them. "Not now, not yet, let me think, but promise me you will do yourself no harm, you will let nothing imperil your life."

"As you will," said the man regretfully. "I had purposed to end it now and forever, but I promise."

"Your word of honor?"

"My word of honor."

"And you won't break it?"

"I never broke it to a human being, much less will I do so to you?"

She released him. He went into the other room and she heard him cross the floor and open the door and go out into the night, into the storm again.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FACE IN THE LOCKET

LEFT alone in the room she sat down again before the fire and drew from her pocket the packet of letters. She knew them by heart, she had read and re-read them often when she had been alone. They had fascinated her. They were letters from some other man to this man's wife. They were signed by an initial only and the identity of the writer was quite unknown to her. The woman's replies were not with the others, but it was easy enough to see what those replies had been. All the passion of which the woman had been capable had evidently been bestowed upon the writer of the letters she had treasured.

Her story was quite plain. She had married Newbold in a fit of pique. He was an Eastern man, the best educated, the most fascinating and interesting of the men who frequented the camp. There had been a quarrel between the letter writer and the woman, there were always quarrels, apparently, but this had been a serious one and the man had savagely flung away and left her. He had not come back as he usually did. She had

waited for him and then she had married Newbold and then he had come back — too late!

He had wanted to kill the other, but she had prevented, and while Newbold was away he had made desperate love to her. He had besought her to leave her husband, to go away with him. He had used every argument that he could to that end and the woman had hesitated and wavered, but she had not consented; she had not denied her love for him any more than she had denied her respect and a certain admiration for her gallant trusting husband. She had refused again and again the requests of her lover. She could not control her heart, nevertheless she had kept to her marriage vows. But the force of her resistance had grown weaker and she had realized that alone she would perhaps inevitably succumb.

Her lover had been away when her husband returned prior to that last fateful journey. Enid Maitland saw now why she had besought him to take her with him. She had been afraid to be left alone! She had not dared to depend upon her own powers any more, her only salvation had been to go with this man whom she did not love, whom at times she almost hated, to keep from falling into the arms of the man she did love. She had been more or less afraid of Newbold. She had soon realized, because she was not blinded by any pas-

sion as he, that they had been utterly mismated. She had come to understand that when the same knowledge of the truth came to him, as it inevitably must some day, nothing but unhappiness would be their portion.

Every kind of an argument in addition to those so passionately adduced in these letters urging her to break away from her husband and to seek happiness for herself while yet there was time, had besieged her heart, had seconded her lover's plea and had assailed her will, and yet she had not given way.

Now Enid Maitland hated the woman who had enjoyed the first young love of the man she herself loved. She hated her because of her priority of possession, because her memory yet came between her and that man. She hated her because Newbold was still true to her memory, because Newbold, believing in the greatness of her passion for him, thought it shame and dishonor to his manhood to be false to her, no matter what love and longing drew him on.

Yet there was a stern sense of justice in the bosom of this young woman. She exulted in the successful battle the poor woman had waged for the preservation of her honor and her good name, against such odds. It was a sex triumph for which she was glad. She was proud of her for

the stern rigor with which she had refused to take the easiest way and the desperation with which she had clung to him she did not love, but to whom she was bound by the laws of God and man, in order that she might not fall into the arms of the man she did love, in defiance of right.

Enid Maitland and this woman were as far removed from each other as the opposite poles of the earth, but there was yet a common quality in each one, of virtuous womanhood, of lofty morality. Natural, perhaps, in the one and to be expected; unnatural, perhaps, and to be unexpected in the other, but there! Now that she knew what love was and what its power and what its force — for all that she had felt and experienced and dreamed about before were as nothing to what it was since he had spoken — she could understand what the struggle must have been in that woman's heart. She could honor her, reverence her, pity her.

She could understand the feeling of the man, too, she could think much more clearly than he. He was distracted by two passions, for his pride and his honor and for her; she had as yet but one, for him. And as there was less turmoil and confusion in her mind, she was the more capable of looking the facts in the face and making the right deduction from them.

She could understand how in the first frightful rush of his grief and remorse and love the very fact that Newbold had been compelled to kill his wife, of whom she guessed he was beginning to grow a little weary, under such circumstances had added immensely to his remorse and quickened his determination to expiate his guilt and cherish her memory. She could understand why he would do just as he had done, go into the wilderness to be alone in horror of himself and in horror of his fellow men, to think only, mistakenly, of her.

Now he was paying the penalty of that isolation. Men were made to live with one another, and no one could violate that law natural, or by so long an inheritance as to have so become, without paying that penalty. His ideas of loyalty and fidelity were warped, his conceptions of his duty were narrow. There was something noble in his determination, it is true, but there was something also very foolish. The dividing line between wisdom and folly is sometimes as indefinite as that between comedy and tragedy, between laughter and tears. If the woman he had married and killed had only hated him and he had known, it would have been different, but since he believed so in her love he could do nothing else.

At that period in her reflections Enid Maitland saw a great light. The woman had not loved

her husband after all, she had loved another. That passion of which he had dreamed had not been for him. By a strange chain of circumstances Enid Maitland held in her hand the solution of the problem. She had but to give him these letters to show him that his golden image had stood upon feet of clay, that the love upon which he had dwelt was not his. Once convinced of that he would come quickly to her arms. She cried a prayer of blessing on old Kirkby and started to her feet, the letters in hand, to call Newbold back to her and tell him, and then she stopped.

Woman as she was, she had respect for the binding conditions and laws of honor as well as he. Chance, nay, Providence, had put the honor of this woman, her rival, in her hands. The world had long since forgotten this poor unfortunate; in no heart was her memory cherished save in that of her husband. His idea of her was a false one, to be sure, but not even to procure her own happiness could Enid Maitland overthrow that ideal, shatter that memory.

She sat down again with the letters in her hand. It had been very simple a moment since, but it was not so now. She had but to show him those letters to remove the great barrier between them.

She could not do it. It was clearly impossible. The reputation of her dead sister who had struggled so bravely to the end was in her hands, she could not sacrifice her even for her own happiness.

Quixotic, you say? I do not think so. She had blundered unwittingly, unwillingly, upon the heart secret of the other woman, she could not betray it. Even if the other woman had been really unfaithful in deed as well as in thought to her husband, Enid could hardly have destroyed his recollection of her. How much more impossible it was since the other woman had fought so heroically and so successfully for her honor. Womanhood demanded her silence. Loyalty, honor, compelled her silence.

A dead hand grasped his heart and the same dead hand grasped hers. She could see no way out of the difficulty. So far as she knew, no human soul except old Kirkby and herself knew this woman's story. She could not tell Newbold and she would have to impose upon Kirkby the same silence as she herself exercised. There was absolutely no way in which the man could find out. He must cherish his dream as he would. She would not enlighten him, she would not disabuse his mind, she could not shatter his ideal, she could not betray his wife. They might love as the

angels of heaven and yet be kept forever apart — by a scruple, an idea, a principle, an abstraction, honor, a name.

Her mind told her these things were idle and foolish, but her soul would not hear of it. And in spite of her resolutions she felt that eventually there would be some way. She would not have been a human woman if she had not hoped and prayed that. She believed that God had created them for each other, that He had thrown them together. She was enough of a fatalist in this instance at least to accept their intimacy as the result of His ordination. There must be some way out of the dilemma.

Yet she knew that he would be true to his belief, and she felt that she would not be false to her obligation. What of that? There would be some way. Perhaps somebody else knew, and then there flashed into her mind the writer of the letters. Who was he? Was he yet alive? Had he any part to play in this strange tragedy aside from that he had already essayed?

Sometimes an answer to a secret query is made openly. At this juncture Newbold came back. He stopped before her unsteadily, his face now marked not only by the fierceness of the storm outside, but by the fiercer grapple of the storm in his heart.

"You have a right," he began, "to know everything now. I can withhold nothing from you."

He had in his hand a picture and something yellow that gleamed in the light. "There," he continued, extending them toward her, "is the picture of the poor woman, who loved me and whom I killed, you saw it once before."

"Yes," she nodded, taking it from him carefully and looking again in a strange commixture of pride, resentment and pity at the bold, somewhat coarse, entirely uncultured, yet handsome face which gave no evidence of the moral purpose which she had displayed.

"And here," said the man, offering the other article, "is something that no human eye but mine has ever seen since that day. It is a locket I took from her neck. Until you came I wore it next my heart."

"And since then?"

"Since then I have been unworthy her as I am unworthy you, and I have put it aside."

"Does it contain another picture?"

"Yes."

"Of her?"

"A man's face."

"Yours?"

He shook his head.

"Look and see," he answered. "Press the spring."

Suiting action to word the next second Enid Maitland found herself gazing upon the pictured semblance of Mr. James Armstrong!

She was utterly unable to suppress an exclamation and a start of surprise at the astonishing revelation. The man looked at her curiously, he opened his mouth to question her, but she recovered herself in part at least and swiftly interrupted him in a panic of terror lest she should betray her knowledge.

"And what is the picture of another man doing in your wife's locket?" she asked to gain time, for she very well knew the reply; knew it, indeed, better than Newbold himself; who, as it happened, was equally in the dark both as to the man and the reason.

"I don't know," answered the other.

"Did you know this man?"

"I never saw him in my life that I can recall."

"And have you — did you — "

"Did I suspect my wife?" he asked. "Never. I had too many evidences that she loved me and me alone for a ghost of suspicion to enter my mind. It may have been a brother, or her father in his youth."

"And why did you wear it?"

"Because I took it from her dead heart. Some day I shall find out who the man is, and when I shall I know there will be nothing to her discredit in the knowledge."

Enid Maitland nodded her head. She closed the locket, laid it on the table and pushed it away from her. So this was the man the woman had loved, who had begged her to go away with him, this handsome Armstrong who had come within an ace of winning her own affection, to whom she was in some measure pledged!

How strangely does fate work out its purposes. Enid had come from the Atlantic seaboard to be the second woman that both these two men loved!

If she ever saw Mr. James Armstrong again, and she had no doubt that she would, she would have some strange things to say to him. She held in her hands now all the threads of the mystery, she was master of all the solutions, and each thread was as a chain that bound her.

"My friend," she said at last with a deep sigh, "you must forget this night and go on as before. You love me, thank God for that, but honor and respect interpose between us. And I love you, and I thank God for that, too, but for me as well the same barrier rises. Whether we shall ever surmount these barriers God alone knows. He brought us together, He put that love in our

hearts, we will have to leave it to Him to do as He will with us both. Meanwhile we must go on as before."

"No," cried the man, "you impose upon me tasks beyond my strength; you don't know what love like mine is, you don't know the heart hunger, the awful madness I feel. Think, I have been alone with a recollection for all these years, a man in the dark, in the night, and the light comes, you are here. The first night I brought you here I walked that room on the other side of that narrow door like a lion pent up in bars of steel. I had only my own love, my own passionate adoration to move me then, but now that I know you love me, that I see it in your eyes, that I hear it from your lips, that I mark it in the beat of your heart, can I keep silent? Can I live on and on? Can I see you, touch you, breathe the same air with you, be shut up in the same room with you hour after hour, day after day, and go on as before? I can't do it; it is an impossibility. What keeps me now from taking you in my arms and from kissing the color into your cheeks, from making your lips my own, from drinking the light from your eyes?" He swayed near to her, his voice rose, "What restrains me?" he demanded.

"Nothing," said the woman, never shrinking back an inch, facing him with all the courage and

daring with which a goddess might look upon a man. "Nothing but my weakness and your strength."

"Yes, that's it; but do not count too much upon the one or the other. Great God, how can I keep away from you. Life on the old terms is insupportable. I must go."

"And where?"

"Anywhere, so it be away."

"And when?"

"Now."

"It would be death in the snow and in the mountains to-night. No, no, you can not go."

"Well, to-morrow then. It will be fair, I can't take you with me, but I must go alone to the settlements, I must tell your friends you are here, alive, well. I shall find men to come back and get you. What I cannot do alone numbers together may effect. They can carry you over the worst of the trails, you shall be restored to your people, to your world again. You can forget me."

"And do you think?" asked the woman, "that I could ever forget you?"

"I don't know."

"And will you forget me?"

"Not as long as life throbs in my veins, and beyond."

"And I too," was the return.

"So be it. You won't be afraid to stay here alone, now."

"No, not since you love me," was the noble answer. "I suppose I must, there is no other way, we could not go on as before. And you will come back to me as quickly as you can with the others?"

"I shall not come back. I will give them the direction, they can find you without me. When I say good-by to you to-morrow it shall be forever."

"And I swear to you," asserted the woman in quick desperation, "if you do not come back, they shall have nothing to carry from here but my dead body. You do not alone know what love is," she cried resolutely, "and I will not let you go unless I have your word to return."

"And how will you prevent my going?"

"I can't. But I will follow you on my hands and knees in the snow until I freeze and die unless I have your promise."

"You have beaten me," said the man hopelessly. "You always do. Honor, what is it? Pride, what is it? Self respect, what is it? Say the word and I am at your feet, I put the past behind me."

"I don't say the word," answered the woman bravely, white faced, pale lipped, but resolute.

"To be yours, to have you mine, is the greatest desire of my heart, but not in the coward's way, not at the expense of honor, of self respect — no not that way. Courage, my friend, God will show us the way, and meantime good night."

"I shall start in the morning."

"Yes," she nodded reluctantly but knowing it had to be, "but you won't go without bidding me good-bye."

"No."

"Good night then," she said extending her hand.

"Good night," he whispered hoarsely and refused it backing away. "I don't dare to take it. I don't dare to touch you again. I love you so, my only salvation is to keep away."

CHAPTER XXI

THE STRENGTH OF THE WEAK

ALTHOUGH Enid Maitland had spoken bravely enough while he was there, when she was alone her heart sank into the depths as she contemplated the dreadful and unsolvable dilemma in which these two lovers found themselves so unwittingly and inextricably involved. It was indeed a curious and bewildering situation. Passionate adoration for the other rose in each breast like the surging tide of a mighty sea and like that tide upon the shore it broke upon conventions, ideas, ideals and obligations intangible to the naked eye but as real as those iron coasts that have withstood the waves' assaults since the world's morning.

The man had shaped his life upon a mistake. He believed absolutely in the unquestioned devotion of a woman to whom he had been forced to mete out death in an unprecedented and terrible manner. His unwillingness to derogate by his own conduct from the standard of devotion which he believed had inhabited his wife's bosom, made it impossible for him to allow the real love

that had come into his heart for this new woman to have free course; honor, pride and self respect scourged him just in proportion to his passion for Enid Maitland.

The more he loved her, the more ashamed he was. By a curious combination of circumstances, Enid Maitland knew the truth, she knew that from one point of view the woman had been entirely unworthy the reverence in which her husband held her memory. She knew that his wife had not loved him at all, that her whole heart had been given to another man, that what Newbold had mistaken for a passionate desire for his society because there was no satisfaction in life for the wife away from him was due to a fear lest without his protection she should be unable to resist the appeal of the other man which her heart seconded so powerfully. If it were only that Newbold would not be false to the obligation of the other woman's devotion, Enid might have solved the problem in a moment.

It was not so simple, however. The fact that Newbold cherished this memory, the fact that this other woman had fought so desperately, had tried so hard not to give way, entitled her to Enid Maitland's admiration and demanded her highest consideration as well. Chance, or Providence, had put her in possession of this woman's secret.

It was as if she had been caught inadvertently eavesdropping. She could not in honor make use of what she had overheard, as it were; she could not blacken the other woman's memory, she could not enlighten this man at the expense of his dead wife's reputation.

Although she longed for him as much as he longed for her, although her love for him amazed her by its depth and intensity, even to bring her happiness commensurate with her feelings she could not betray her dead sister. The imposts of honor, how hard they are to sustain when they conflict with love and longing.

Enid Maitland was naturally not a little thrown off her balance by the situation and the power that was hers. What she could not do herself she could not allow anyone else to do. The obligation upon her must be extended to others. Old Kirkby had no right to the woman's secret any more than she, he must be silenced. Armstrong, the only other being privy to the truth, must be silenced too.

One thing at least arose out of the sea of trouble in a tangible way, she was done with Armstrong. Even if she had not so loved Newbold that she could scarcely give a thought to any other human being, she was done with Armstrong.

A singular situation! Armstrong had loved another woman, so had Newbold, and the latter had even married this other woman, yet she was quite willing to forgive Newbold, she made every excuse for him, she made none for Armstrong. She was an eminently sane, just person, yet as she thought of the situation her anger against Armstrong grew hotter and hotter. It was a safety valve to her feelings, although she did not realize it. After all, Armstrong's actions rendered her a certain service; if she could get over the objection in her soul, if she could ever satisfy her sense of honor and duty, and obligation, she could settle the question at once. She had only to show the letters to Newbold and to say, "These were written by the man of the picture; it was he and not you your wife loved," and Newbold would take her to his heart instantly.

These thoughts were not without a certain comfort to her. All the compensation of self-sacrifice is in its realization. That she could do and yet did not somehow ennobled her love for him. Even women are alloyed with base metal. In the powerful and universal appeal of this man to her, she rejoiced at whatever was of the soul rather than of the body. To possess power, to refrain from using it in obedience to some higher law is perhaps to pay oneself the most flattering of com-

pliments. There was a satisfaction to her soul in this which was yet denied him.

Her action was quite different from his. She was putting away happiness which she might have had in compliance with a higher law than that which bids humanity enjoy. It was flattering to her mind. In his case it was otherwise: he had no consciousness that he was a victim of misplaced trust, of misinterpreted action; he thought the woman for whom he was putting away happiness was almost as worthy, if infinitely less desirable, as the woman whom he now loved.

Every sting of conscious weakness, every feeling of realized shame, every fear of ultimate disloyalty, scourged him. She could glory in it; he was ashamed, humiliated, broken.

She heard him savagely walking up and down the other room, restlessly impelled by the same Erinnyes who of old scourged Orestes, the violater of the laws of moral being, drove him on. These malign Eumenides held him in their hands. He was bound and helpless; rage as he might in one moment, pray as he did in another, no light came into the whirling darkness of his torn, tempest tossed, driven soul. The irresistible impulse and the immovable body the philosophers puzzled over were exemplified in him. While he almost hated the new woman, while he almost

loved the old, yet that he did neither the one thing nor the other absolutely was significant.

Indeed he knew that he was glad Enid Maitland had come into his life. No life is complete until it is touched by that divine fire which for lack of another name we call love. Because we can experience that sensation we are said to be made in God's image. The image is blurred as the animal predominates, it is clearer as the spiritual has the ascendency.

The man raved in his mind. White faced, stern, he walked up and down, he tossed his arms about him, he stopped, his eyes closed, he threw his hands up toward God, his heart cried out under the lacerations of the blows inflicted upon it. No flagellant of old ever trembled beneath the body lash as he under the spiritual punishment.

He prayed that he might die at the same moment that he longed to live. He grappled blindly for solutions of the problem that would leave him with untarnished honor and undiminished self-respect and fidelity, and yet give him this woman; and in vain. He strove to find a way to reconcile the past with the present, realizing as he did so the futility of such a proposition. One or the other must be supreme; he must inexorably hold to his ideas and his ideals, or he must inevitably take the woman.

How frightful was the battle that raged within his bosom. Sometimes in his despair he thought that he would have been glad if he and she had gone down together in the dark waters before all this came upon him. The floods of which the heavens had emptied themselves had borne her to him. Oh, if they had only swept him out of life with its trouble, its trials, its anxieties, its obligations, its impossibilities! If they had gone together! And then he knew that he was glad even for the torture, because he had seen her, because he had loved her, and because she had loved him.

He marveled at himself curiously and in a detached way. There was a woman who loved him, who had confessed it boldly and innocently; there were none to say him nay. The woman who stood between had been dead five years, the world knew nothing, cared nothing; they could go out together, he could take her, she would come. On the impulse he turned and ran to the door and beat upon it. Her voice bade him enter and he came in.

Her heart yearned to him. She was shocked, appalled, at the torture she saw upon his face. Had he been laid upon the rack and every joint pulled from its sockets, he could not have been more white and agonized.

"I give up," he cried. "What are honor and self-respect to me? I want you. I have put the past behind. You love me, and I, I am yours with every fiber of my being. Great God! Let us cast aside these foolish quixotic scruples that have kept us apart. If a man's thoughts declare his guilt I am already disloyal to the other woman; deeply, entirely so. I have betrayed her, shamed her, abandoned her. Let me have some compensation for what I have gone through. You love me, come to me."

"No," answered the woman, and no task ever laid upon her had been harder than that. "I do love you, I will not deny it, every part of me responds to your appeal. I should be so happy that I cannot even think of it, if I could put my hand in your own, if I could lay my head upon your shoulder, if I could feel your heart beat against mine, if I could give myself up to you, I would be so glad, so glad. But it can not be, not now."

"Why not?" pleaded the man.

He was by her side, his arm went around her. She did not resist physically, it would have been useless; she only laid her slender hand upon his broad breast and threw her head back and looked at him.

"See," she said, "how helpless I am, how weak

in your hands? Every voice in my heart bids me give way. If you insist I can deny you nothing. I am helpless, alone, but it must not be. I know you better than you know yourself, you will not take advantage of affection so unbounded, of weakness so pitiable."

Was it the wisdom of calculation, or was it the wisdom of instinct by which she chose her course? Resistance would have been unavailing, in weakness was her strength.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth!

Yes, that was true. She knew it now if never before, and so did he.

Slowly the man released her. She did not even then draw away from him; she stood with her hand still on his breast, she could feel the beating of his heart beneath her fingers.

"I am right," she said softly. "It kills me to deny you anything, my heart yearns toward you, why should I deny it, it is my glory not my shame."

"There is nothing above love like ours," he pleaded, wondering what marvelous mastery she exercised that she stopped him by a hand's touch, a whispered word, a faith.

"No; love is life, love is God, but even God Himself is under obligations of righteousness.

For me to come to you now, to marry you now, to be your wife, would be unholy. There would not be that perfect confidence between us that must endure in that relation. Your honor and mine, your self-respect and mine would interpose. If I can't have you with a clear conscience, if you can't come to me in the same way, we are better apart. Although it kills me, although life without you seems nothing and I would rather not live it, we are better apart. I cannot be your wife until —"

"Until what and until when?" demanded Newbold.

"I don't know," said the woman, "but I believe that somewhere, somehow, we shall find a way out of our difficulty. There is a way," she said a little incautiously, "I know it."

"Show it to me."

"No, I can not."

"What prevents?"

"'The same thing which prevents you, honor, loyalty."

"To a man?"

"To a woman."

"I don't understand."

"No, but you will some day," she smiled at him. "See," she said, "through my tears I can smile at you, though my heart is breaking. I

know that in God's good time this will work itself out."

"I can't wait for God, I want you now," persisted the other.

"Hush, don't say that," answered the woman, for a moment laying her hand on his lips. "But I forgive you, I know how you suffer."

The man could say nothing, do nothing. He stared at her a moment and his hand went to his throat as if he were choking.

"Unworthy," he said hoarsely, "unworthy of the past, unworthy of the present, unworthy of the future. May God forgive me, I never can."

"He will forgive you, never fear," answered Enid gently.

"And you?" asked her lover. "I have ruined your life."

"No, you have ennobled it. Let nothing ever make you forget that. Wherever you are and whatever you do and whatever you may have been, I love you and I shall love you to the end. Now you must go, it is so late, I can't stand any more. I throw myself on your mercy again. I grow weaker and weaker before you. As you are a man, as you are stronger, save me from myself. If you were to take me again in your arms," she went on steadily, "I know not how I could drive you back. For God's sake, if you love me—"

That was the hardest thing he had ever done, to turn and go out of the room, out of her sight and leave her standing there with eyes shining, with pulses throbbing, with breath coming fast, with bosom panting. Once more, and at a touch she might have yielded!

BOOK V
THE CUP IS DRAINED

CHAPTER XXI

THE CHALLENGE OF THE RANGE

MR. JAMES ARMSTRONG sat at his desk before the west window of his private room in one of the tallest buildings in Denver. His suite of offices was situated on one of the top floors and from it over the intervening house tops and other buildings, he had a clear and unobstructed view of the mighty range. The earth was covered with snow. It had fallen steadily through the night but with the dawn the air had cleared and the sun had come out brightly although it was very cold.

Letters, papers, documents, the demands of a business extensive and varied, were left unnoticed. He sat with his elbow on the desk and his head on his hand, looking moodily at the range. In the month that had elapsed since he had received news of Enid Maitland's disappearance he had sat often in that way, in that place, staring at the range, a prey to most despondent reflections, heavy hearted and disconsolate indeed.

After that memorable interview with Mr. Stephen Maitland in Philadelphia he had deemed

it proper to await there the arrival of Mr. Robert Maitland. A brief conversation with that distracted gentleman had put him in possession of all the facts in the case. As Robert Maitland had said, after his presentation of the tragic story, the situation was quite hopeless. Even Armstrong reluctantly admitted that her uncle and old Kirkby had done everything that was possible for the rescue or discovery of the girl.

Therefore the two despondent gentlemen had shortly after returned to their western homes, Robert Maitland in this instance being accompanied by his brother Stephen. The latter never knew how much his daughter had been to him until this evil fate had befallen her. Robert Maitland had promised to inaugurate a thorough and extensive search to solve the mystery of her death, which he felt was certain, in the spring when the weather permitted humanity to have free course through the mountains.

Mr. Stephen Maitland found a certain melancholy satisfaction in being at least near the place where neither he nor anyone had any doubt his daughter's remains lay hid beneath the snow or ice on the mountains in the freezing cold. Robert Maitland had no other idea than that Enid's body was in the lake. He intended to drain it — an engineering task of no great difficulty —

and yet he intended also to search the hills for miles on either side of the main stream down which she had gone; for she might possibly have strayed away and died of starvation and exposure rather than drowning. At any rate he would leave nothing undone to discover her.

He had strenuously opposed Armstrong's recklessly expressed intention of going into the mountains immediately to search for her. Armstrong was not easily moved from any purpose he once entertained or lightly to be hindered from attempting any enterprise that he projected, but by the time the party reached Denver the winter had set in and even he realized the futility of any immediate search for a dead body lost in the mountains. Admitting that Enid was dead the conclusions were sound of course.

The others pointed out to Armstrong that if the woman they all loved had by any fortunate chance escaped the cloud burst she must inevitably have perished from cold, starvation and exposure in the mountain long since. There was scarcely a possibility that she could have escaped the flood, but if she had it would only to be devoted to death a little later. If she was not in the lake what remained of her would be in some lateral cañon. It would be impossible to discover her body in the deep snows until the spring and the warm

weather came. When the snows melted what was concealed would be revealed. Alone, she could do nothing. And admitting again that Enid was alone this conclusion was as sound as the other.

Now no one had the faintest hope that Enid Maitland was yet alive except perhaps her father, Mr. Stephen Maitland. They could not convince him, he was so old and set in his opinions and so utterly unfamiliar with the conditions that they tried to describe to him, that he clung to his belief in spite of all, and finally they let him take such comfort as he could from his vain hope without any further attempt at contradiction.

In spite of all the arguments, however, Mr. James Armstrong was not satisfied. He was as hopeless as the rest, but his temperament would not permit him to accept the inevitable calmly. It was barely possible that she might not be dead and that she might not be alone. There was scarcely enough possibility of this to justify a suspicion, but that is not saying there was none at all.

Day after day he had sat in his office denying himself to everyone and refusing to consider anything, brooding over the situation. He loved

Enid Maitland, he loved her before and now that he had lost her he loved her still more.

Not altogether admirable had been James Armstrong's outwardly successful career. In much that is high and noble and manly his actions — and his character — had often been lacking, but even the base can love and sometimes love transforms if it be given a chance. The passion of Cymon for Iphigenia, made a man and prince out of the rustic boor. His real love for Enid Maitland might have done more for Armstrong than he himself or anyone who knew him as he was — and few there were who had such knowledge of him — dreamed was possible. There was one thing that love could not do, however; it could not make him a patient philosopher, a good waiter. His rule of life was not very high, but in one way it was admirable in that prompt bold decisive action was its chiefest characteristic.

On this certain morning a month after the heart breaking disaster his power of passive endurance had been strained to the vanishing point. The great white range was flung in his face like a challenge. Within its secret recesses lay the solution of the mystery. Somewhere, dead or alive, beyond the soaring rampart was the woman he loved. It was impossible for him to remain

quiet any longer. Common sense, reason, every argument that had been adduced, suddenly became of no weight. He lifted his head and stared straight westward. His eyes swept the long semi-circle of the horizon across which the mighty range was drawn like the chord of a gigantic arc or the string of a mighty bow. Each white peak mocked him, the insolent aggression of the range called him irresistibly to action.

"By God," he said under his breath, rising to his feet, "winter or no winter, I go."

Robert Maitland had offices in the same building. Having once come to a final determination there was no more uncertainty or hesitation about Armstrong's course. In another moment he was standing in the private room of his friend. The two men were not alone there. Stephen Maitland sat in a low chair before another window removed from the desk somewhat, staring out at the range. The old man was huddled down in his seat, every line of his figure spoke of grief and despair. Of all the places in Denver he liked best his brother's office fronting the rampart of the mountains, and hour after hour he sat there quietly looking at the summits, sometimes softly shrouded in white, sometimes swept bare by the fierce winter gales that blew across them, sometimes shining and sparkling so that the eye

could scarce sustain their reflection of the dazzling sun of Colorado; and at other times seen dimly through mists of whirling snow.

Oh, yes, the mountains challenged him also to the other side of the range. His heart yearned for his child, but he was too old to make the attempt. He could only sit and pray and wait with such faint and fading hope as he could still cherish until the break up of the spring came. For the rest he troubled nobody; nobody noticed him, nobody marked him, nobody minded him. Robert Maitland transacted his business a little more softly, a little more gently, that was all. Yet the presence of his brother was a living grief and a living reproach to him. Although he was quite blameless he blamed himself. He did not know how much he had grown to love his niece until he had lost her. His conscience accused him hourly, and yet he knew not where he was at fault or how he could have done differently. It was a helpless and hopeless situation. To him, therefore, entered Armstrong.

"Maitland," he began, "I can't stand it any longer, I'm going into the mountains."

"You are mad!"

"I can't help it. I can't sit here and face them, damn them, and remain quiet."

"You will never come out alive."

"Oh, yes I will, but if I don't I swear to God I don't care."

Old Stephen Maitland rose unsteadily to his feet and gripped the back of his chair.

"Did I hear aright, sir?" he asked with all the polished and graceful courtesy of birth and breeding which never deserted him in any emergency whatsoever. "Do you say — "

"I said I was going into the mountains to search for her."

"It is madness," urged Robert Maitland.

But the old man did not hear him.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed with deep feeling. "I have sat here day after day and watched those mighty hills, and I have said to myself that if I had youth and strength as I have love, I would not wait."

"You are right," returned Armstrong, equally moved, and indeed it would have been hard to have heard and seen that father unresponsively, "and I am not going to wait either."

"I understand your feeling, Jim, and yours too, Steve," began Robert Maitland, arguing against his own emotions, "but even if she escaped the flood, she must be dead by this time."

"You needn't go over the old arguments, Bob. I'm going into the mountains and I'm going now. No," he continued swiftly, as the other opened his

mouth to interpose further objections, "you needn't say another word. I'm a free agent and I'm old enough to decide what I can do. There is no argument, there is no force, there is no appeal, there is nothing that will restrain me. I can't sit here and eat my heart out when she may be there."

"But it's impossible!"

"It isn't impossible. How do I know that there may not have been somebody in the mountains, she may have wandered to some settlement, some hunter's cabin, some prospector's hut."

"But we were there for weeks and saw nothing, no evidence of humanity."

"I don't care. The mountains are filled with secret nooks you could pass by within a stone's throw and never see into, she may be in one of them. I suppose she is dead and it's all foolish, this hope, but I'll never believe it until I have examined every square rod within a radius of fifty miles from your camp. I'll take the long chance, the longest even."

"Well, that's all right," said Robert Maitland. "Of course I intend to do that as soon as the spring opens, but what's the use of trying to do it now?"

"It's use to me. I'll either go mad here in Denver, or I must go to seek for her there."

"But you will never come back if you once get in those mountains alone."

"I don't care whether I do or not. It's no use, old man, I am going and that's all there is about it."

Robert Maitland knew men, he recognized finality when he heard it or when he saw it and it was quite evident that he was in the presence of it then. It was of no use for him or anyone to say more.

"Very well," he said, "I honor you for your feeling even if I don't think much of your common sense."

"Damn common sense," cried Armstrong triumphantly, "it's love that moves me now."

At that moment there was a tap on the door. A clerk from an outer office bidden to enter announced that old Kirkby was in the anteroom.

"Bring him in," directed Maitland, eager to welcome him.

He fancied that the new comer would undoubtedly assist him in dissuading Armstrong from his foolhardy, useless enterprise.

"Mornin', old man," drawled Kirkby.

"Howdy, Armstrong. My respects to you, sir," he said, sinking his voice a little as he bowed respectfully toward Mr. Stephen Maitland, a very

sympathetic look in the old frontiersman's eyes at the sight of the bereaved father.

"Kirkby, you've come in the very nick of time," at once began Robert Maitland.

"Allus glad to be Johnny-on-the-spot," smiled the older man.

"Armstrong here," continued the other intent upon his purpose, "says he can't wait until the spring and the snows melt, he is going into the mountains now to look for Enid."

Kirkby did not love Armstrong, he did not care for him a little bit, but there was something in the bold hardihood of the man, something in the way which he met the reckless challenge of the mountains that the old man and all the others felt that moved the inmost soul of the hardy frontiersman. He threw an approving glance at him.

"I tell him that it is absurd, impossible; that he risks his life for nothing, and I want you to tell him the same thing. You know more about the mountains than either of us."

"Mr. Kirkby," quavered Stephen Maitland, "allow me. I don't want to influence you against your better judgment, but if you could sit here as I have done and think that maybe she is there and perhaps alive still, and in need, you would not say a word to deter him."

"Why, Steve," expostulated Robert Maitland,

" surely you know I would risk anything for Enid; somehow it seems as if I were being put in the selfish position by my opposition."

" No, no," said his brother, " it isn't that. You have your wife and children, but this young man — "

" Well, what do you say, Kirkby? Not that it makes any difference to me what anybody says. Come, we are wasting time," interposed Armstrong, who, now that he had made up his mind, was anxious to be off.

" Jim Armstrong," answered Kirkby decidedly, " I never thought much of you in the past, an' I think sence you've put out this last projick of yourn that I'm entitled to call you a damn fool, w'ich you are, an' I'm another, for I'm goin' into the mountains with you."

" Oh, thank God! " cried Stephen Maitland fervently.

" I know you don't like me," answered Armstrong; " that's neither here nor there. Perhaps you have cause to dislike me, perhaps you have not; I don't like you any too well myself; but there is no man on earth I'd rather have go with me on a quest of this kind than you, and there's my hand on it."

Kirkby shook it vigorously.

" This ain't committin' myself," he said cau-

tiously. "So far's I'm concerned you ain't good enough for Miss Maitland, but I admires your spirit, Armstrong, an' I'm goin' with you. Tain't no good, twon't produce nothin', most likely we'll never come back agin; but jest the same I'm goin' along; nobody's goin' to show me the trail; my nerve and grit w'en it comes to helpin' a young feemale like that girl is as good as anybody's I guess. You're her father," he drawled on, turning to Stephen Maitland, "an' I ain't no kin to her, but by gosh, I believe I can understand better than anyone else yere what you are feelin'."

"Kirkby," said Robert Maitland, smiling at the other two, "you have gone clean back on me. I thought you had more sense. But somehow I guess it's contagious, for I am going along with you two myself."

"And I, cannot I accompany you?" pleaded Stephen Maitland, eagerly drawing near to the other three.

"Not much," said old Kirkby promptly. "You ain't got the stren'th, ol' man, you don't know them mountains, nuther; you'd be helpless on a pair of snow shoes, there ain't anything you could do, you'd jest be a drag on us. Without sayin' anything about myself, w'ich I'm too modest for that, there ain't three better men in Colorado to tackle this job than Jim Armstrong an' Bob

Maitland an' — well, as I said, I won't mention no other names."

"God bless you all, gentlemen," faltered Stephen Maitland. "I think perhaps I may have been wrong, a little prejudiced against the west, you are men that would do honor to any family, to any society in Philadelphia or anywhere else."

"Lord love ye," drawled Kirkby, his eyes twinkling, "there ain't no three men on the Atlantic seaboard that kin match up with two of us yere, to say nothin' of the third."

"Well," said Robert Maitland, "the thing now is to decide on what's to be done."

"My plan," said Armstrong, "is to go to the old camp."

"Yep," said Kirkby, "that's a good point of deeparture, as my seafarin' father down Cape Cod way used to say, an' wot's next."

"I am going up the cañon instead of down," said the man, with a flash of inspiration.

"That ain't no bad idea nuther," assented the old man; "we looked the ground over pretty thoroughly down the cañon, mebbe we can find something up it."

"And what do you propose to take with you?" asked Maitland.

"What we can carry on the backs of men.

We will make a camp somewhere about where you did. We can get enough husky men up at Morrison who will pack in what we want and with that as a basis we will explore the upper reaches of the range."

"And when do we start?"

"There is a train for Morrison in two hours," answered Armstrong. "We can get what we want in the way of sleeping bags and equipment between now and then if we hurry about it."

"Ef we are goin' to do it, we might as well git a move on us," assented Kirby, making ready to go.

"Right," answered Robert Maitland grimly. "When three men set out to make fools of themselves the sooner they get at it and get over with it the better. I've got some business matters to settle, you two get what's needed and I'll bear my share."

A week later a little band of men on snow shoes, wrapped in furs to their eyes, every one heavily burdened with a pack, staggered into the clearing where once had been pitched the Maitland camp. The place was covered with snow of course, but on a shelf of rock half way up the hogback, they found a comparatively level clearing and there, all working like beavers, they built a rude hut which they covered with canvas and

then with tightly packed snow and which would keep the three who remained from freezing to death. Fortunately they were favored by a brief period of pleasant weather and a few days served to make a sufficiently habitable camp.

Maitland, Kirkby and Armstrong worked with the rest. There was no thought of search at first. Their lives depended upon the erection of a suitable shelter and it was not until the helpers, leaving their burdens behind them, had departed that the three men even considered what was to be done next.

"We must begin a systematic search to-morrow," said Armstrong decisively as the three men sat around the cheerful fire in the hut.

"Yes," assented Maitland. "Shall we go together, or separately?"

"Separately, of course. We are all hardy and experienced men, nothing is apt to happen to us, we will meet here every night and plan the next day's work. What do you say, Kirkby?"

The old man had been quietly smoking while the others talked. He smiled at them in a way which aroused their curiosity and made them feel that he had news for them.

"While you was puttin' the finishin' touches on this yere camp, I come acrost a heap o' stuns, that somehow the wind had swept bare. There was

a big drift in front of it w'ich kep' us from seein' it afore; it was built up in the open w'ere there want no trees, an' in our lumberin' operations we want lookin' that-a-way. I came acrost a bottle by chance an' — "

"Well, for God's sake, old man," cried Armstrong impatiently, "what did you find in it, anything?"

"This," answered Kirkby, carefully producing a folded scrap of paper from his leather vest.

Armstrong fell on it ravenously, and as Maitland bent over him they both read these words by the fire light.

"Miss Enid Maitland, whose foot is so badly crushed as to prevent her traveling, is safe in a cabin at the head of this canon. I put this notice here to reassure any who may be seeking her as to her welfare. Follow the stream up to its source."

Wm. Berkeley Newbold.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Robert Maitland.

"You called me a damn fool, Kirkby," said Armstrong, his eyes gleaming. "What do you think of it now?"

"It's the damn fool, I find," said Kirkby sapiently, "that gener'ly gits there. Providence seems to be a-watchin' over 'em."

"You said you chanced on this paper, Jack,"

continued Maitland, "it looks to me like the deliberate intention of Almighty God."

"I reckon so," answered the other simply. "You see He's got to look after all the damn fools on earth to keep 'em from doin' too much damage to theirselves an' to others in this yere crooked trail of a world."

"Let us start now," urged Armstrong.

"Tain't possible," said the old man, taking another puff at his pipe, and only a glistening of the eye betrayed the joy that he felt; otherwise his phlegmatic calm was unbroken, his demeanor just as undisturbed as it always was. "We'd jest throw away our lives a wanderin' round these yere mountains in the dark, we've got to have light an' clear weather. Ef it should be snowin' in the mornin' we'd have to wait until it cleared."

"I won't wait a minute," cried Armstrong. "At daybreak, weather or no weather, I start."

"What's your hurry, Jim?" continued Kirkby calmly. "The gal's safe, one day more or less ain't goin' to make no difference."

"She's with another man," answered Armstrong quickly.

"Do you know this Newbold?" asked Maitland, looking at the note again.

"No, not personally, but I have heard of him."

"I know him," answered Kirkby quickly, "an'

you've seed him too, Bob; he's the fellow that shot his wife, that married Louise Rosser."

"That man!"

"The very same."

"You say you never saw him, Jim?" asked Maitland.

"I repeat I never met him," said Armstrong, flushing suddenly, "but I knew his wife."

"Yes, you did that —" drawled the old mountaineer.

"What do you mean?" flashed Armstrong.

"I mean that you knowed her, that's all," answered the old man with an innocent air that was almost childlike.

When the others woke up in the morning Armstrong's sleeping bag was empty. Kirkby crawled out of his own warm nest, opened the door and peered out into the storm.

"Well," he said, "I guess the damn fool has beat God this time; it don't look to me as if even He could save him now."

"But we must go after him at once," urged Maitland.

"See for yourself," answered the old man, throwing wider the door. "We've got to wait 'til this wind dies down unless we give the Almighty the job o' lookin' after three instid o' one."

CHAPTER XXII

THE CONVERGING TRAILS

WHATEVER the feelings of the others, Armstrong found himself unable to sleep that night. It seemed to him that fate was about to play him the meanest and most fantastic of tricks. Many times before in his crowded life he had loved other women, or so he characterized his feelings, but his passion for Louise Rosser Newbold had been in a class by itself until he had met Enid Maitland. Between the two there had been many women, but these two were the high points, the rest was lowland.

Once before, therefore, this Newbold had cut in ahead of him and had won the woman he loved. Armstrong had cherished a hard grudge against him for a long time. He had not been of those who had formed the rescue party led by old Kirkby and Maitland which had buried the poor woman on the great butte in the deep cañon. Before he got back to the camp the whole affair was over and Newbold had departed. Luckily for him, Armstrong had always thought, for he had been so mad with grief and rage and jealousy

that if he had come across him helpless or not he would have killed him out of hand.

Armstrong had soon enough forgotten Louise Rosser, but he had not forgotten Newbold. All his ancient animosity had flamed into instant life again, at the sight of his name last night. The inveteracy of his hatred had been in no way abated by the lapse of time it seemed.

Everybody in the mining camp had supposed that Newbold had wandered off and perished in the mountains, else Armstrong might have pursued him and hunted him down. The sight of his name on that piece of paper was outward and visible evidence that he still lived. It had almost the shock of a resurrection, and a resurrection to hatred rather than to love. If Newbold had been alone in the world, if Armstrong had chanced upon him in the solitude, he would have hated him just as he did; but when he thought that his ancient enemy was with the woman he now loved, with a growing intensity, beside which his former resentment seemed weak and feeble, he hated him yet the more.

He could not tell when the notice, which he had examined carefully, was written; there was no date upon it, but he could come to only one conclusion. Newbold must have found Enid Maitland alone in the mountains very shortly

after her departure and he had had her with him in his cabin alone for at least a month. Armstrong gritted his teeth at the thought. He did not undervalue the personality of Newbold, he had never happened to see him, but he had heard enough about him to understand his qualities as a man. The tie that bound Armstrong to Enid Maitland was a strong one, but the tie by which he held her to him, if indeed he held her at all, was very tenuous and easily broken; perhaps it was broken already, and so he hated him still more and more.

Indeed his animosity was so great and growing that for the moment he took no joy in the assurance of the girl's safety, yet he was not altogether an unfair man and in calmer moments he thanked God in his own rough way that the woman he loved was alive and well, or had been when the note was written. He rejoiced that she had not been swept away with the flood or that she had not been lost in the mountains and forced to wander on, finally to starve and freeze and die. In one moment her nearness caused his heart to throb with joyful anticipation. The certainty that at the first flush of day he would seek her again sent the warm blood to his cheeks. But these thoughts would be succeeded by the knowledge that she was with his enemy. Was this

man to rob him of the latest love as he had robbed him of the first? Perhaps the hardest task that was ever laid upon Armstrong was to lie quietly in his sleeping bag and wait until the morning.

So soon as the first indication of dawn showed through the cracks of the door, he slipped quietly out of his sleeping bag and without disturbing the others drew on his boots, put on his heavy fur coat and cap and gloves, slung his Winchester and his snow shoes over his shoulder and without stopping for a bite to eat softly opened the door, stepped out and closed it after him. It was quite dark in the bottom of the cañon, although a few pale gleams overhead indicated the near approach of day. It was quite still, too. There were clouds on the mountain top heavy with threat of wind and snow.

The way was not difficult, the direction of it that is. Nor was the going very difficult at first; the snow was frozen and the crust was strong enough to bear him. He did not need his snow shoes and indeed would have had little chance to use them in the narrow broken rocky pass. He had slipped away from the others because he wanted to be the first to see the man and the woman. He did not want any witness to that meeting. They would have to come on later of course, but he wanted an hour or two in private

with Enid and Newbold without any interruption. His conscience was not clear. Nor could he settle upon a course of action.

How much Newbold knew of his former attempt to win away his wife, how much of what he knew he had told Enid Maitland, Armstrong could not surmise. Putting himself into Newbold's place and imagining that the engineer had possessed entire information, he decided that he must have told everything to Enid Maitland so soon as he had found out the quasi relation between her and Armstrong. And Armstrong did not believe the woman he loved could be in anybody's presence a month without telling something about him. Still it was possible that Newbold knew nothing and that he told nothing therefore.

The situation was paralyzing to a man of Armstrong's decided, determined temperament. He could not decide upon the line of conduct he should pursue. His course in this, the most critical emergency he had ever faced, must be determined by circumstances of which he felt with savage resentment he was in some measure the sport. He would have to leave to chance what ought to be subject to his will. Of only one thing was he sure — he would stop at nothing, murder, lying, nothing to win that woman, and to settle his score with that man.

There was really only one thing he could do and that was to press on up the cañon. He had no idea how far it might be or how long a journey he would have to make before he reached that shelf on the high hill where stood that hut in which she dwelt. As the crow flies it could not be a great distance, but the cañon zigzagged through the mountains with as many curves and angles as a lightning flash. He plodded on therefore with furious haste, recklessly speeding over places where a misstep in the snow or a slip on the icy rocks would have meant death or disaster to him.

He had gone about an hour, and had perhaps made four miles from the camp, when the storm burst upon him. It was now broad day and the sky was filled with clouds and the air with driving snow. The wind whistled down the cañon with terrific force, it was with difficulty that he made any headway at all against it. It was a local storm; if he could have looked through the snow he would have discovered calmness on the top of the peaks. It was one of those sudden squalls of wind and snow which rage with terrific force while they last but whose range was limited and whose duration would be as short as it was violent.

A less determined man than he would have bowed to the inevitable and sought some shelter

behind a rock until the fury of the tempest was spent, but there was no storm that blew that could stop this man so long as he had strength to drive against it. So he bent his head to the fierce blast and struggled on. There was something titantic and magnificent about the iron determination and persistence of Armstrong. The two most powerful passions which move humanity were at his service; love led him and hate drove him. And the two were so intermingled that it was difficult to say which predominated, now one and now the other. The resultant of the two forces however was an onward move that would not be denied.

His fur coat was soon covered with snow and ice, the sharp needles of the storm cut his face wherever it was exposed. The wind forced its way through his garments and chilled him to the bone. He had eaten nothing since the night before and his vitality was not at its flood, but he pressed onward and upward and there was something grand in his indomitable progress. *Excelsior!*

Back in the hut Kirkby and Maitland sat around the fire waiting most impatiently for the wind to blow itself out and for that snow to stop falling through which Armstrong struggled forward. As he followed the windings of the cañon, not daring to ascend to the summit of either wall

and seek short cuts across the range, he was sensible that he was constantly rising. There were many indications to his experienced mind; the decrease in the height of the surrounding pines, the increasing rarity of the icy air, the growing difficulty in breathing under the sustained exertion he was making, the quick throbbing of his accelerated heart, all told him he was approaching his journey's end.

He judged that he must now be drawing near the source of the stream, and that he would presently come upon the shelter. He had no means of ascertaining the time, he would not have dared to unbutton his coat to glance at his watch, and it is difficult to measure the flying minutes in such scenes as those through which he passed, but he thought he must have gone at least seven miles in perhaps three hours, which he fancied had elapsed, his progress in the last two having been frightfully slow. Every foot of advance he had to fight for.

Suddenly, after a quick turn in the cañon, a passage through a narrow entrance between lofty cliffs, and he found himself in a pocket or a circular amphitheater which he could see was closed on the further side. The bottom of this enclosure or valley was covered with pines, now drooping under tremendous burdens of snow. In the midst of

the pines a lakelet was frozen solid, the ice was covered with the same dazzling carpet of white.

He could have seen nothing of this had not the sudden storm now stopped as precipitately almost as it had begun. Indeed, accustomed to the grayness of the snowfall, his eyes were fairly dazzled by the bright light of the sun, now quite high over the range, which struck him full in the face.

He stopped, panting, exhausted, and leaned against the rocky wall of the cañon's mouth which here rose sheer over his head. This certainly was the end of the trail, the lake was the source of the frozen rivulet along whose rocky and torn banks he had tramped since dawn. Here if anywhere he would find the object of his quest.

Refreshed by the brief pause and encouraged by the sudden stilling of the storm, he stepped out of the cañon and ascended a little knoll whence he had a full view of the pocket over the tops of the pines. Shading his eyes from the light with his hand as best he could, he slowly swept the circumference with his eager glance, seeing nothing until his eye fell upon a huge broken trail of rocks projecting from the snow, indicating the ascent to a broad bare shelf of the mountains across the lake to the right. Following this up

he saw a huge block of snow which suggested dimly the outlines of a hut!

Was that the place? Was she there? He stared fascinated and as he did so a thin curl of smoke rose above the snow heap and wavered up in the cold quiet air! That was a human habitation then, it could be none other than the hut referred to in the note. Enid Maitland must be there, and Newbold!

The lake lay directly in front of him beyond the trees at the foot of the knoll and between him and the slope that led up to the hut. If it had been summer, he would have been compelled to follow the water's edge to the right or to the left, both journeys would have led over difficult trails with little to choose between them, but the lake was now frozen hard and covered with snow. He had no doubt that the snow would bear him, but to make sure he drew his snow shoes from his shoulder, slipped his feet in the straps, and sped straight on through the trees and then across the lake like an arrow from a bow.

In five minutes he was at the foot of the giant stairs. Kicking off his snow shoes he scrambled up the broken way, easily finding in the snow a trail which had evidently been passed and repassed daily. In a few moments he was at the

top of the shelf. A hard trampled path ran between high walls of snow to a door!

Behind that door what would he find? Just what he brought to it, love and hate he fancied. We usually find on the other side of doors no more and no less than we bring to our own sides. But whatever it might be, there was no hesitation in Armstrong's course. He ran toward it, laid his hand on the latch and opened it.

What creatures of habit we are! Early in that same morning, after one vain attempt again to influence the woman who was now the deciding and determining factor and who seemed to be taking the man's place, Newbold, ready for his journey, had torn himself away from her presence and had plunged down the giant stair. He had done everything that mortal man could do for her comfort; wood enough to last her for two weeks had been taken from the cave and piled in the kitchen and elsewhere so as to be easily accessible to her, the stores she already had the run of and he had fitted a stout bar to the outer door which would render it impregnable to any attack that might be made against it, although he saw no quarter from which any assault impended.

Enid had recovered not only her strength but a good deal of her nerve. That she loved this

man and that he loved her had given her courage. She would be fearfully lonely of course, but not so much afraid as before. The month of immunity in the mountains without any interruption had dissipated any possible apprehensions on her part. It was with a sinking heart however that she saw him go at last.

They had been so much together in that month they had learned what love was. When he came back it would be different, he would not come alone. The first human being he met would bring the world to the door of the lonely but beloved cabin in the mountains — the world with its questions, its inferences, its suspicions, its denunciations and its accusations! Some kind of an explanation would have to be made, some sort of an answer would have to be given, some solution of the problem would have to be arrived at. What these would be she could not tell.

Newbold's departure was like the end of an era to her. The curtain dropped, when it rose again what was to be expected? There was no comfort except in the thought that she loved him. So long as their affections matched and ran together nothing else mattered. With the solution of it all next to her sadly beating heart she was still supremely confident that Love, or God — and there was not so much difference between

them as to make it worth while to mention the One rather than the Other — would find the way.

Their leave taking had been singularly cold and abrupt. She had realized the danger he was apt to incur and she had exacted a reluctant promise from him that he would be careful.

"Don't throw your life away, don't risk it even, remember that it is mine," she had urged.

And just as simply as she had enjoined it upon him he had promised. He had given his word that he would not send help back to her but that he would bring it back, and she had confidence in that word. A confidence that had he been inclined to break his promise would have made it absolutely impossible. There had been a long clasp of the hands, a long look in the eyes, a long breath in the breast, a long throb in the heart and then — farewell. They dared no more.

Once before he had left her and she had stood upon the plateau and followed his vanishing figure with anxious troubled thought until it had been lost in the depths of the forest below. She had controlled herself in this second parting for his sake as well as her own. Under the ashes of his grim repression she realized the presence of live coals which a breath would have fanned into flame. She dared nothing while he was there, but when he shut the door behind him the neces-

sity for self-control was removed. She had laid her arms on the table and bowed her head upon them and shook and quivered with emotions unrelieved by a single tear — weeping was for lighter hearts and less severe demands!

His position after all was the easier of the two. As of old it was the man who went forth to the battle field while the woman could only wait passively the issue of the fight. Although he was half blinded with emotion he had to give some thought to his progress, and there was yet one task to be done before he could set forth upon his journey toward civilization and rescue.

It was fortunate, as it turned out, that this obligation detained him. He was that type of a merciful man whose mercies extended to his beasts. The poor little burros must be attended to and their safety assured so far as it could be, for it would be impossible for Enid Maitland to care for them. Indeed he had already exacted a promise from her that she would not leave the plateau and risk her life on the icy stairs with which she was so unfamiliar.

He had gone to the corral and shaken down food enough for them which if it had been doled out to them day by day would have lasted longer than the week he intended to be absent; of course he realized that they would eat it up in half that

time, but even so they would probably suffer not too great discomfort before he got back.

All these preparations took some little time. It had grown somewhat late in the morning before he started. There had been a fierce storm raging when he first looked out and at her earnest solicitation he had delayed his departure until it had subsided.

His tasks at the corral were at last completed; he had done what he could for them both, nothing now remained but to make the quickest and safest way to the settlement. Shouldering the pack containing his ax and gun and sleeping bag and such provisions as would serve to tide him over until he reached human habitations, he set forth. He did not look up to the hut; indeed, he could not have seen it for the corral was almost directly beneath it; but if it had been in full view he would not have looked back, he could not trust himself to; every instinct, every impulse in his soul would fain drag him back to that hut and to the woman. It was only his will and, did he but know it, her will that made him carry out his purpose.

He would have saved perhaps half a mile on his journey if he had gone straight across the lake to the mouth of the cañon. We are creatures of habit. He had always gone around the lake on

the familiar trail and unconsciously he followed that trail that morning. He was thinking of her as he plodded on in a mechanical way over the trail which followed the border of the lake for a time, plunged into the woods, wound among the pines and at last reached that narrow rift in the encircling wall through which the river flowed. He had passed along the white way oblivious to all his surroundings, but as he came to the entrance he could not fail to notice what he suddenly saw in the snow.

Robinson Crusoe when he discovered the famous footprint of Man Friday in the sand was not more astonished at what met his vision than Newbold on that winter morning. For there, in the virgin whiteness, were the tracks of a man!

He stopped dead with a sudden contraction of the heart. Humanity other than he and she in that wilderness? It could not be! For a moment he doubted the evidence of his own senses. He shook his pack loose from his shoulders and bent down to examine the tracks to read if he could their indications. He could see that some one had come up the cañon, that someone had leaned against the wall, that someone had gone on. Where had he gone?

To follow the new trail was child's play for him. He ran by the side of it until he reached

the knoll. The stranger had stopped again, he had shifted from one foot to another, evidently he had been looking about him seeking someone, only Enid Maitland of course. The trail ran forward to the edge of the frozen lake, there the man had put on his snow shoes, there he had sped across the lake like an arrow and like an arrow himself, although he had left behind his own snow shoes, Newbold ran upon his track. Fortunately the snow crest upbore him. The trail ran straight to the foot of the rocky stairs. The newcomer had easily found his way there.

With beating heart and throbbing pulse, Newbold himself bounded up the acclivity after the stranger, marking as he did so evidences of the other's prior ascent. Reaching the top like him he ran down the narrow path and in his turn laid his hand upon the door.

He was not mistaken, he heard voices within. He listened a second and then flung it open, and as the other had done, he entered.

Way back on the trail, old Kirkby and Robert Maitland, the storm having ceased, were rapidly climbing up the cañon. Fate was bringing all the actors of the little drama within the shadow of her hand.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ODDS AGAINST HIM

THE noise of the opening of the door and the inrush of cold air that followed awoke Enid Maitland to instant action. She rose to her feet and faced the entrance through which she expected Newbold to reappear — for of course the newcomer must be he — and for the life of her she could not help that radiating flash of joy at that momentary anticipation which fairly transfigured her being; although if she had stopped to reflect she would have remembered that not in the whole course of their acquaintance had Newbold ever entered her room at any time without knocking and receiving permission.

Some of that joy yet lingered in her lovely face when she tardily recognized the newcomer in the half light. Armstrong, scarcely waiting to close the door, sprang forward joyfully with his hands outstretched.

"Enid!" he cried.

Naturally he thought the look of expectant happiness he had surprised upon her face was for him and he accounted for its sudden disappear-

ance by the shock of his unexpected, unannounced, abrupt, entrance.

The warm color had flushed her face, but as she stared at him her aspect rapidly changed. She grew paler. The happy light that had shone in her eyes faded away and as he approached her she shrank back.

"You!" she exclaimed almost in terror.

"Yes," he answered smilingly, "I have found you at last. Thank God you are safe and well. Oh, if you could only know the agonies I have gone through. I thought I loved you when I left you six weeks ago, but now —"

In eager impetuosity he drew nearer to her. Another moment and he would have taken her in his arms, but she would have none of him.

"Stop," she said with a cold and inflexible sternness that gave pause even to his buoyant joyful assurance.

"Why, what's the matter?"

"The matter? Everything, but —"

"No evasions, please," continued the man still cheerfully but with a growing misgiving. His suspicions in abeyance for the moment because of his joy at seeing her alive and well arose with renewed force. "I left you practically pledged to me," he resumed.

"Not so fast," answered Enid Maitland, determined to combat the slightest attempt to establish a binding claim upon her.

"Isn't it true?" asked Armstrong. "Here, wait," he said before she could answer, "I am half frozen, I have been searching for you since early morning in the storm." He unbuttoned and unbelted his huge fur coat as he spoke and threw it carelessly on the floor by his Winchester leaning against the wall. "Now," he resumed, "I can talk better."

"You must have something to eat then," said the girl.

She was glad of the interruption since she was playing for time. She did not quite know how the interview would end, he had come upon her so unexpectedly and she had never formulated how she should say to him that which she felt she must say. She must have time to think, to collect herself, which he on his part was quite willing to give her, for he was not much better prepared for the interview than she. He really was hungry and tired; his early journey had been foolhardy and in the highest degree dangerous. The violence of his admiration for her, added to the excitement of her presence and the probable nearness of Newbold as to whose whereabouts he wondered, were not conducive to rapid recupera-

tion. It would be comfort to him also to have food and time.

"Sit down," she said. "I shall be back in a moment.

The fire of the morning was still burning in the stove in the kitchen; to heat a can of soup, to make him some buttered toast and hot coffee were the tasks of a few moments. She brought them back to him, set them on the table before him and bade him fall to.

"By Jove," exclaimed the man after a little time as he began to eat hastily but with great relish what she had prepared, while she stood over him watching him silently, "this is cozy. A warm, comfortable room, something to eat served by the finest woman in the world, the prettiest girl on earth to look at — what more could a man desire? This is the way it's going to be always in the future."

"You have no warrant whatever for saying or hoping that," answered the girl slowly but decisively.

"Have I not?" asked the man quickly. "Did you not say to me a little while ago that you liked me better than any man you had ever met and that I might win you if I could? Well, I can, and what's more I will in spite of yourself." He laughed. "Why, the memory of that kiss

I stole from you makes me mad." He pushed away the things before him and rose to his feet once more. "Come, give me another," he said; "it isn't in the power of woman to stand out against a love like mine."

"Isn't it?"

"No, indeed."

"Louise Newbold did," she answered very quietly, but with the swiftness and the dexterity of a sword thrust by a master hand, a mighty arm.

Armstrong stared at her in open-mouthed astonishment.

"What do you know about Louise Rosser or Newbold?" he asked at last.

"All that I want to know."

"And did that damned hound tell you?"

"If you mean Mr. Newbold, he never mentioned your name, he does not know you exist."

"Where is he now?" thundered the man.

"Have no fear," answered the woman calmly, "he has gone to the settlements to tell them I am safe and to seek help to get me out of the mountains."

"Fear!" exclaimed Armstrong, proudly, "I fear nothing on earth. For years, ever since I heard his name in fact, I have longed to meet him. I want to know who told you about that woman, Kirkby?"

"He never mentioned your name in connection with her."

"But you must have heard it somewhere," cried the man thoroughly bewildered. "The birds of the air didn't tell it to you, did they?"

"She told me herself," answered Enid Maitland.

"She told you! Why, she's been dead in her grave five years, shot to death by that murderous dog of a husband of hers."

"A word with you, Mr. Armstrong," said the woman with great spirit. "You can't talk that way about Mr. Newbold; he saved my life twice over, from a bear and then in the cloud burst which caught me in the cañon."

"That evens up a little," said Armstrong. "Perhaps for your sake I will spare him."

"You!" laughed the woman contemptuously. "Spare him! Be advised, look to yourself; if he ever finds out what I know, I don't believe any power on earth could save you."

"Oh," said Armstrong carelessly enough, although he was consumed with hate and jealousy and raging against her clearly evident disdain, "I can take care of myself, I guess. Anyway, I only want to talk about you, not about him or her. Your father —"

"Is he well?"

"Well enough, but heart-broken, crushed. I happened to be in his house in Philadelphia when the telegram came from your uncle that you were lost and probably dead. I had just asked him for your hand," he added, smiling grimly at the recollection.

"You had no right to do that."

"I know that."

"It was not, it is not, his to give."

"Still, when I won you I thought it would be pleasant all around if he knew and approved."

"And did he?"

"Not then, he literally drove me out of the house; but afterward he said if I could find you I could have you; and I have found you and I will have you whether you like it or not."

"Never," said the woman decisively.

The situation had got on Armstrong's nerves, and he must perforce show himself in his true colors. His only resources were his strength, not of mind but of body. He made another most damaging mistake at this juncture.

"We are alone here, and I am master, remember," he said meaningly. "Come, let's make it up. Give me a kiss for my pains and — "

"I have been been alone here for a month with another man," answered Enid Maitland, who was strangely unafraid in spite of his threat.

"A gentleman, he has never so much as offered to touch my hand without my permission; the contrast is quite to your disadvantage."

"Are you jealous of Louise Rosser?" asked Armstrong, suddenly seeing that he was losing ground and casting about desperately to account for it, and to recover what was escaping him. "Why, that was nothing, a mere boy and girl affair," he ran on with specious good humor, as if it were all a trifle. "The woman was, I hate to say it, just crazy in love with me, but I really never cared anything especially for her, it was just a harmless sort of flirtation anyway. She afterward married this man Newbold and that's all there was about it."

The truth would not serve him and in his desperation and desire he staked everything on this astounding lie. The woman he loved looked at him with her face as rigid as a mask.

"You won't hold that against me, will you?" pleaded the man. "I told you that I'd been a man among men, yes among women, too, here in this rough country and that I wasn't worthy of you; there are lots of things in my past that I ought to be ashamed of and I am, and the more I see you the more ashamed I grow, but as for loving any one else all that I've ever thought or felt or experienced before now is just nothing."

And this indeed was true, and even Enid Maitland with all her prejudice could realize and understand it. Out of the same mouth, it was said of old, proceeded blessing and cursing, and from these same lips came truth and falsehood; but the power of the truth to influence this woman was as nothing to the power of falsehood. She could never have loved him, she now knew; a better man had won her affections, a nobler being claimed her heart; but if Armstrong had told the truth regarding his relationship to Newbold's wife and then had completed it with his passionate avowal of his present love for her, she would have at least admired him and respected him.

"You have not told me the truth," she answered directly, "you have deliberately been false."

"Can't you see," protested the man, drawing nearer to her, "how much I love you?"

"Oh, that, yes I suppose that is true; so far as you can love anyone I will admit that you do love me."

"So far as I can love anyone?" he repeated after her. "Give me a chance and I'll show you."

"But you haven't told the truth about Mrs. Newbold. You have calumniated the dead, you have sought to shelter yourself by throwing the

burden of a guilty passion upon the weaker vessel, it isn't manlike, it isn't — "

Armstrong was a bold fighter, quick and prompt in his decisions. He made another effort to set himself right. He staked his all on another throw of the dice, which he began to feel were somehow loaded against him.

"You are right," he admitted, wondering anxiously how much the woman really knew. "It wasn't true, it was a coward's act, I am ashamed of it. I'm so mad with love for you that I scarcely know what I am doing, but I will make a clean breast of it now. I loved Louise Rosser after a fashion before ever Newbold came on the scene. We were pledged to each other, a foolish quarrel arose, she was jealous of other girls — "

"And had she no right to be?"

"Oh, I suppose so. We broke it off anyway, and then she married Newbold, out of pique, I suppose, or what you will. I thought I was heart-broken at the time, it did hit me pretty hard; it was five or six years ago, I was a youngster then, I am a man now. The woman has been dead long since. There was some cock-and-bull story about her falling off a cliff and her husband being compelled to shoot her. I didn't half believe it at the time and naturally I have been

waiting to get even with him. I have been hating him for five years, but he has been good to you and we will let bygones be bygones. What do I care for Louise Rosser, or for him, or for what he did to her, now? I am sorry that I said what I did, but you will have to charge it to my blinding passion for you. I can truthfully say that you are the one woman that I have ever craved with all my heart. I will do anything, be anything, to win you."

It was very brilliantly done, he had not told a single untruth, he had admitted much, but he had withheld the essentials after all. He was playing against desperate odds, he had no knowledge of how much she knew, or where she had learned anything. Everyone about the mining camp where she had lived had known of his love for Louise Rosser, but he had not supposed there was a single human soul who had been privy to its later developments, and he could not figure out any way by which Enid Maitland could have learned by any possibility any more of the story than he had told her. He had calculated swiftly and with the utmost nicety, just how much he should confess. He was a keen witted, clever man and he was fighting for what he held most dear, but his eagerness and zeal, as they have often done, overrode his judgment, and he made an-

other mistake at this juncture. His evil genius was at his elbow.

"You must remember," he continued, "that you have been alone here in these mountains with a man for over a month; the world — "

"What, what do you mean?" exclaimed the girl, who indeed knew very well what he meant, but who would not admit the possibility.

"It's not every man," he added, blindly rushing to his doom, "that would care for you or want you — after that."

He received a sudden and terrible enlightenment.

"You coward," she cried, with upraised hand, whether in protest or to strike him neither ever knew, for at that moment the door opened the second time that morning to admit another man.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE LAST RESORT OF KINGS AND MEN

THE sudden entrant upon a quarrel between others is invariably at a disadvantage. Usually he is unaware of the cause of difference and generally he has no idea of the stage of development of the affair that has been reached. Newbold suffered from this lack of knowledge and to these disadvantages were added others. For instance, he had not the faintest idea as to who or what was the stranger. The room was not very light in the day time, Armstrong happened to be standing with his back to it at some distance from the window by the side of which Enid stood. Six years naturally and inevitably make some difference in a man's appearance and it is not to be wondered that at first Newbold did not recognize the man before him as the original of the face in his wife's locket, although he had studied that face over and over again. A nearer scrutiny, a longer study would have enlightened him of course, but for the present he saw nothing but a stranger visibly perturbed on one side and the woman he loved apparently fiercely resentful,

sternly indignant, confronting the other with an upraised hand.

The man, whoever he was, had affronted her, had aroused her indignation, perhaps had insulted her, that was plain. He went swiftly to her side, he interposed himself between her and the man.

"Enid," he asked, and his easy use of the name was a revelation and an illumination to Armstrong, "who is this man, what has he done?"

It was Armstrong who replied. If Newbold were in the dark, not so he; although they had never spoken, he had seen Newbold. He recognized him instantly, indeed recognized or not the newcomer could be no other than he. There was doubtless no other man in the mountains. He had expected to find him when he approached the hut and was ready for him.

To the fire of his ancient hatred and jealousy was added a new fuel that increased its heat and flame. This man had come between Armstrong and the woman he loved before and had got away unscathed, evidently he had come between him and this new woman he loved. Well, he should be made to suffer for it this time and by Armstrong's own hands. The instant Newbold had entered the room Armstrong had thirsted to leap upon him and he meant to do it. One or the

other of them, he swore in his heart, should never leave that room alive.

But Newbold should have his chance. Armstrong was as brave, as fearless, as intrepid, as any man on earth. There was much that was admirable in his character; he would not take any man at a disadvantage in an encounter such as he proposed. He would not hesitate to rob a man of his wife if he could and he would not shrink from any deceit necessary to gain his purpose with a woman, for good or evil, but he had his own ideas of honor, he would not shoot an enemy in the back for instance.

Singular perversion, this, to which some minds are liable! To take from a man his wife by subtle and underhand methods, to rob him of that which makes life dear and sweet — there was nothing dishonorable in that! But to take his life, a thing of infinitely less moment, by the same process — that was not to be thought of. In Armstrong's code it was right, it was imperative, to confront a man with the truth and take the consequences; but to confront a woman with a lie and take her body and soul, if so be she might be gained, was equally admirable. And there are other souls than Armstrong's in which this moral inconsistency and obliquity about men and women has lodgment.

Armstrong confronted Newbold therefore, lustful of battle; he yearned to leap upon him, his fingers itched to grasp him, then trembled slightly as he rubbed them nervously against his thumbs; his face protruded a little, his eyes narrowed.

"My name is Armstrong," he said, determined to precipitate the issue without further delay and flinging the words at the other in a tone of hectoring defiance which, however, strange to say, did not seem to affect Newbold in exactly the degree he had anticipated.

Yet the name was an illumination to Newbold, though not at all in the way the speaker had fancied; the recollection of it was the one fact concerning the woman he loved that rankled in the solitary's mind. He had often wanted to ask Enid Maitland what she had meant by that chance allusion to Armstrong which she had made in the beginning of their acquaintance, but he had refrained. At first he had no right to question her, there could be no natural end to their affections; and latterly when their hearts had been disclosed to each other in the wild, tempestuous, passionate scenes of the last two or three days, he had had things of greater moment to engage his attention, subjects of more importance to discuss with her.

He had for the time being forgotten Armstrong and he had not before known what jealousy was until he had entered that room. To have seen her with any man would have given him acute pain, perhaps just because he had been so long withdrawn from human society, but to see her with this man who flashed instantly into his recollection upon the utterance of his name was an added exasperation.

Newbold turned to the woman, to whom indeed he had addressed his question in the first place, and there was something in his movement which bespoke a galling, almost contemptuous, obliviousness to the presence of the other man which was indeed hard for him to bear.

Hate begets hate. He was quite conscious of Armstrong's antagonism, which was entirely undisguised and open and which was growing greater with every passing moment. The score against Newbold was running up in the mind of his visitor.

"Ah," coolly said the owner of the cabin to the latest of his two guests, "I do remember Miss Maitland did mention your name the first day she spent here. Is he a — a friend of yours?" he asked of the woman.

"Not now," answered Enid Maitland.

She too was in a strange state of perturbation

on account of the dilemma in which she found herself involved. She was determined not to betray the unconscious confidence of the dead. She hoped fervently that Newbold would not recognize Armstrong as the man of the locket, but if he did she was resolute that he should not also be recognized as the man of the letters, at least not by her act. Newbold was ignorant of the existence of those letters and she did not intend that he should be enlightened so far as she could prevent it. But she was keen enough to see that the first recognition would be inevitable; she even admitted the fact that Armstrong would probably precipitate it himself. Well, no human soul, not even their writer, knew that she had the letters except old Kirkby and he was far away. She wished that she had destroyed them; she had determined to do so at the first convenient opportunity. Before that, however, she intended to show them not to Newbold but to Armstrong, to disclose his perfidy, to convict him of the falsehood he had told her and to justify herself even in his eyes for the action she had taken.

Mingled with all these quick reflections was a deadly fear. She was quick to perceive the hatred Armstrong cherished against Newbold on the one hand because of the old love affair, the long standing grudge breaking into sudden life;

on the other because of her own failure to come to Armstrong's hand and her love for Newbold which she had no desire to conceal. The cumulation of all these passionate antagonisms would only make him the more desperate, she knew.

Whether or not Newbold found out Armstrong's connection with his past love there was sufficient provocation in the present to evoke all the oppugnation and resentment of his nature. Enid felt as she might if the puncheons of the floor had been sticks of dynamite with active detonators in every heel that pressed them; as if the slightest movement on the part of anyone would bring about an explosion.

The tensity of the situation was bewildering to her. It had come upon her with such startling force; the unexpected arrival of Armstrong, of all the men on earth the one who ought not to be there, and then the equally startling arrival of Newbold, of whom perhaps the same might have been said. If Newbold had only gone on, if he had not come back, if she had been rescued by her uncle or old Kirkby — But "ifs" were idle, she had to face a present situation to which she was utterly unequal.

She had entirely repudiated Armstrong, that was one sure point; she knew how guilty he had been toward Newbold's wife, that was another;

she realized how he had deceived her, that was the third. These eliminated the man from her affections. But it is one thing to thrust a man out of your heart and another to thrust him out of your life; he was still there. And by no means the sport of blind fate, Armstrong intended to have something to say as to the course of events, to use his own powers to determine the issue.

Of but one thing besides her hatred for Armstrong was Enid Maitland absolutely certain; she would never disclose to the man she loved the fact that the woman, the memory of whose supposed passion he cherished, had been unfaithful to him in heart if not in deed. Nothing could wrest that secret from her. She had been infected by Newbold's quixotic ideas, the contagion of his perversion of common sense had fastened itself upon her. She would not have been human either if she had not experienced a thrill of pride and joy at the possibility that in some way, of which she yet swore she would not be the instrument blind or otherwise, the facts might be disclosed which would enable Newbold to claim her openly and honorably, without hesitation before or remorse after, as his wife. This fascinating flash of expectant hopeful feeling she thought unworthy of her and strove to fight it down, but with manifest impossibility.

It has taken time to set these things down; to speak or to write is a slow process and the ratio between outward expressions and inward is as great as that between light and sound. Questions and answers between these three followed as swiftly as thrust and parry between accomplished swordsmen, and yet between each demand and reply they had time to entertain these swift thoughts — as the drowning compass life experiences in seconds!

"I may not be her friend," said Armstrong steadily, "but she left me in these mountains a month ago with more than a half way promise to marry me, and I have sought her through the snows to claim the fulfillment."

"You never told me that," exclaimed Newbold sternly and again addressing the woman rather than the man.

"There was nothing to tell," she answered quickly. "I was a young girl, heart free. I liked this man, perhaps because he was so different from those to whom I had been accustomed and when he pressed his suit upon me, I told him the truth. I did not love him, I did not know whether I might grow to care for him or not; if I did, I should marry him and if I did not no power on earth could make me. And now — I hate him!"

She flung the hard and bitter words at him savagely.

Armstrong was beside himself with fury at her remark, and Newbold's cool indifference to him personally was unendurable. In battle such as he waged he had the mistaken idea that anything was fair. He could not really tell whether it was love of woman or hate of man that was most dominant; he saw at once the state of affairs between the two. He could hurt the man and the woman with one statement; what might be its ulterior effect he did not stop to consider; perhaps if he had he would not have cared greatly then. He realized anyway that since Newbold's arrival his chance with Enid was gone; perhaps whether Newbold were alive or dead it was gone forever, although Armstrong did not think that, he was not capable of thinking very far into the future in his then condition, the present bulked too large for that.

"I did not think after that kiss in the road that you would go back on me this way, Enid," he said quickly.

"The kiss in the road!" cried Newbold, staring again at the woman.

"You coward," repeated she, with one swift envenomed glance at the other man and then she turned to her lover. She laid her hand upon his

arm, she lifted her face up to him. "As God is my judge," she cried, her voice rising with the tragic intensity of the moment and thrilling with indignant protest, "he took it from me like the thief and the coward he was and he tells it now like the liar he is. We were riding side by side, I was utterly unsuspicious, I thought him a gentleman, he caught me and kissed me before I knew it, I drove him from me. That's all."

"I believe you," said Newbold gently, and then, for the second time, he addressed himself to Armstrong. "You came doubtless to rescue Miss Maitland, and in so far your purpose was admirable and you deserve thanks and respect, but no further. This is my cabin, your words and your conduct render you unwelcome here. Miss Maitland is under my protection, if you will come outside I will be glad to talk with you further."

"Under your protection?" sneered Armstrong, completely beside himself. "After a month with you alone I take it she needs no further protection."

Newbold did not leap upon the man for that mordant insult to the woman, his approach was slow, relentless, terrible. Eight or ten feet separated them. Armstrong met him half way, his impetuosity was the greater, he sprang forward,

turned about, faced the full light from the narrow window.

"Well," he cried, "have you got anything to say or do about it?"

For Newbold had stopped, appalled. He stood staring as if petrified; recognition, recollection rushed over him. Now and at last he knew the man. The face that confronted him was the same face that had stared out at him from the locket he had taken from the bruised breast of his dead wife, which had been a mystery to him for all these years.

"Well," tauntingly asked Armstrong again, "what are you waiting for, are you afraid?"

From Newbold's belt depended a holster and a heavy revolver. As Armstrong made to attack him he flashed it out with astonishing quickness and presented it. The newcomer was unarmed, his Winchester leaned against the wall by his fur coat and he had no pistol.

"If you move a step forward or backward," said Newbold with deadly calm, "I will kill you without mercy."

"So you'd take advantage of a weaponless man, would you?" sneered Armstrong.

"Oh, for God's sake," cried the woman, "don't kill him."

"You both misjudge me," was the answer.

"I shall take no advantage of this man. I would disdain to do so if it were necessary, but before the last resort I must have speech with him, and this is the only way in which I can keep him quiet for a moment, if as I suspect, his hate measures with mine."

"You have the advantage," protested Armstrong. "Say your say and get it over with. I've waited all these years for a chance to kill you and my patience is exhausted."

Still keeping the other covered, Newbold stepped over to the table, pulled out the drawer and drew from it the locket. Enid remembered she had hastily thrust it there when he had handed it to her and there it had lain unnoted and forgotten. It was quite evident to her what was toward now. Newbold had recognized the other man, explanations were inevitable. With his left hand Newbold sought the catch of the locket and pressed the spring. In two steps he faced Armstrong with the open locket thrust toward him.

"Your picture?" he asked.

"Mine."

"Do you know the locket?"

"I gave it to a woman named Louise Rosser five or six years ago."

"My wife."

"Yes, she was crazy in love with me but — "

With diabolic malice Armstrong left the sentence uncompleted. The inference he meant should be drawn from his reticence was obvious.

"I took it from her dead body," gritted out Newbold.

"She was beside herself with love for me, an old affair, you know," said Armstrong more explicitly, thinking to use a spear with a double barb to pierce the woman's and the man's heart alike. That he defamed the dead was of no moment then. "She wanted to leave you," he ran on glibly, "she wanted me to take her back and — "

"Untrue," burst forth from Enid Maitland's lips. "A slanderous, dastardly, cowardly untruth."

But the men paid no attention to her in their excitement, perhaps they did not even hear her. Newbold thrust his pistol violently forward.

"Would you murder me as you murdered the woman?" gibed Armstrong in bitter taunt.

Then Enid Maitland found it in her heart to urge Newbold to kill him where he stood, but she had no time if she could have carried out her design, for Newbold flung the weapon from him and the next moment the two men leaped upon each other, straining, struggling, clawing, battling

like savage beasts, each seeking to clasp his fingers around the throat of the other and then twist and crush until life was gone.

Saying nothing, fighting in a grim silence that was terrible, they reeled crashing about the little room. No two men on earth could have been better matched, yet Newbold had a slight advantage in height and strength, as he had also the advantage in simple life and splendid condition. Armstrong's hate and fierce temper counterbalanced these at first and with arms locked and legs twined, with teeth clenched and eyes blinded and pulses throbbing and hearts beating, they strove together.

The woman shrank back against the wall and stared frightened. She feared for her lover, she feared for herself. Strange primitive feelings throbbed in her veins. It was an old situation, when two male animals fought for supremacy and the ownership of a female, whose destiny was entirely removed from her own hands.

Armstrong had shown himself in his true colors at last. She would have nothing to hope from him if he were the victor and she even wondered in terror what might happen to her if the man she loved triumphed after the passions aroused in such a battle. She grew sick and giddy, her bosom rose and fell, her breath came fast as she

followed the panting, struggling, clinging, grinding figures about the room.

At first there had been no advantage to either, but now after five minutes — or was it hours? — of fierce fighting, the strength and superior condition of her lover began to tell. He was forcing the other backward. Slowly, inch by inch, foot by foot, step by step, he mastered him. The two intertwining figures were broadside to her now, she could see their faces inflamed by the lust of the battle, engorged, blood red with hate and fury. There was a look of exultation in one and the shadow of approaching disaster in the other. But the consciousness that he was being mastered ever so little only increased Armstrong's determination and he fought back with the frenzy, the strength of a maddened gorilla, and again for a space the issue was in doubt. But not for long.

The table, a heavy, cumbersome, four-legged affair, solid almost as a rock, stood in the way. Newbold at last backed Armstrong up against it and by superhuman effort bent him over it, held him with one arm and using the table as a support, wrenched his left hand free, and sunk his fingers around the other's throat. It was all up with Armstrong. It was only a question of time now.

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It was all up with Armstrong .

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LOS ANGELES

"Now," Newbold guttered out hoarsely, "you slandered the dead woman I married, and you insulted the living one I love. Take back what you said before you die."

"I forgive him," cried Enid Maitland. "Oh, don't kill him before my eyes."

Armstrong was past speech. The inveteracy of his hatred could be seen even in his fast glazing eyes, the indomitableness of his purpose yet spoke in the negative shake of his head. He could die, but he would die in his hate and in his purpose.

Enid ran to the two, she grappled Newbold's arm with both her own and strove with all her might to tear it away from the other's throat. Her lover paid no more attention to her than if a summer breeze had touched him. Armstrong grew black in the face, his limbs relaxed, another second or two and it would have been over with him.

Once more the door was thrown open, through it two snow covered men entered. One swift glance told them all, one of them at least had expected it. On the one side Kirkby, on the other Maitland, tore Newbold away from his prey just in time to save Armstrong's life. Indeed the latter was so far gone that he fell from the table to the floor unconscious, choking, almost dying. It

was Enid Maitland who received his head in her arms and helped bring him back to life while the panting Newbold stood staring dully at the woman he loved and the man he hated on the floor at his feet.

CHAPTER XXV

THE BECOMING END

"WHY did you interfere?" when at last he got his breath again, asked Newbold of Maitland who still held him firmly although restraint was now unnecessary, the heat and fire of his passion being somewhat gone out of him. "I meant to kill him."

"He'd oughter die sure nuff," drawled old Kirkby, rising from where he had been kneeling by Armstrong's side, "but I don't know's how you're bound to be his executioner. He's all right now, Miss Enid," said the old man. "Here" — he took a pillow from the bunk and slipped it under his head and then extending his hands he lifted the excited almost distraught woman to her feet — "tain't fittin' for you to tend on him."

"Oh," exclaimed Enid, her limbs trembling, the blood flowing away from her heart, her face deathly white, fighting against the faintness that came with the reaction, while old Kirkby supported and encouraged her. "I thank God you came. I don't know what would have happened if you had not."

"Has this man mistreated you?" asked Robert Maitland, suddenly tightening his grip upon his hard breathing but unresisting passive prisoner.

"No, no," answered his niece. "He has been everything that a man should be."

"And Armstrong?" continued her uncle.

"No, not even he."

"I came in time, thank God!" ejaculated Newbold.

By this time Armstrong had recovered consciousness. To his other causes for hatred were now added chagrin, mortification, shame. He had been overcome. He would have been a dead man and by Newbold's hands if the others had not interfered. He almost wished they had let his enemy alone. Well, he had lost everything but a chance for revenge on them all.

"She has been alone here with this man in this cabin for a month," he said thickly. "I was willing to take her in spite of that, but —"

"He made that damned suggestion before," cried Newbold, his rage returning. "I don't know who you are —"

"My name is Robert Maitland, and I am this girl's uncle."

"Well, if you were her father, I could only swear —"

"It isn't necessary to swear anything," answered Maitland serenely. "I know this child. And I believe I'm beginning to find out this man."

"Thank you, Uncle Robert," said Enid gratefully, coming nearer to him as she spoke. "No man could have done more for me than Mr. Newbold has, and no one could have been more considerate of me. As for you," she turned on Armstrong, who now slowly got to his feet, "your insinuations against me are on a par with your charges against the dead woman, beneath contempt."

"What did he say about her?" asked Old Kirkby.

"You know my story?" asked Newbold.

"Yes."

"He said that my wife had been unfaithful to me — with him — and that he had refused to take her back."

"And it was true," snarled Armstrong.

It was all Maitland could do to check Newbold's rush, but in the end it was old Kirkby who most effectively interposed.

"That's a damned lie," he said quietly with his usual drawling voice.

"You can say so," laughed Armstrong, "but that doesn't alter the facts."

"An' I can prove it," answered the old man triumphantly.

It was coming, the secret that she had tried to conceal was about to be revealed, thought Enid. She made a movement toward the old man. She opened her mouth to bid him be silent and then stopped. It would be useless she knew. The determination was no longer hers. The direction of affairs had been withdrawn from her. After all it was better that the unloving wife should be proved faithful, even if her husband's cherished memory of her love for him had to be destroyed thereby. Helpless she listened knowing full well what the old frontiersman's next word would be.

"Prove it!" mocked Armstrong. "How?"

"By your own hand, out of your own mouth, you dog," thundered old Kirkby. "Miss Enid, w'ere are them letters I give you?"

"I — I —" faltered the girl, but there was no escape from the keen glance of the old man, her hand went to the bosom of her tunic.

"Letters!" exclaimed Armstrong. "What letters?"

"These," answered Enid Maitland, holding up the packet.

Armstrong reached for them but Kirkby again interposed.

"No, you don't," he said dryly. "Them ain't

for your eyes yit. Mr. Newbold, I found them letters on the little shelf w'ere your wife first struck w'en she fell over onto the butte w'ere she died. I figgered out her dress was tore open there an' them letters she was carryin' fell out an' lodged there. We had ropes an' we went down over the rocks that way. I went first an' I picked 'em up. I never told nobody about it an' I never showed 'em to a single human bein' until I give 'em to Miss Maitland at the camp."

"Why not?" asked Newbold, taking the letters.

"There wasn't no good tellin' nobody then, jest fer the sake o' stirrin' up trouble."

"But why did you give them to her at last?"

"Because I was afeered she might fall in love with Armstrong. I supposed she'd know his writin', but w'en she didn't I jest let her keep 'em anyway. I knowed it'd all come out somehow; there is a God above us in spite of all the damned scoundrels on earth like this un."

"Are these letters addressed to my dead wife?" asked Newbold.

"They are," answered Enid Maitland; "look and see."

"And did Mr. Armstrong write them?"

"He'll deny it, I suppose," answered Kirkby.

"But I am familiar with his handwriting," said Maitland.

Taking the still unopened packet from Newbold he opened it, examined one of the letters and handed them all back.

"There is no doubt about it," he said. "It's Armstrong's hand, I'll swear to it."

"Oh, I'll acknowledge them," said Armstrong, seeing the absolute futility of further denial. He had forgotten all about the letters. He had not dreamed they were in existence. "You've got me beat between you, the cards are stacked against me, I've done my damndest—" and indeed that was true.

Well, he had played a great game, battling for a high stake he had stuck at nothing. A career in which some good had mingled with much bad was now at an end. He had lost utterly, would he show himself a good loser?

"Mr. Armstrong," said Newbold, quietly extending his hand, "here are your letters."

"What do you mean?"

"I am not in the habit of reading letters addressed to other people without permission and when the recipient of them is dead long since, I am doubly bound."

"You're a damned fool," cried Armstrong contemptuously.

"That kind of a charge from your kind of a man is perhaps the highest compliment you could pay me. I don't know whether I shall ever get rid of the doubt you have tried to lodge in my soul about my dead wife, but —"

"There ain't no doubt about it," protested old Kirkby earnestly. "I've read them letters a hundred times over, havin' no scruples whatsomever, an' in every one of 'em he was beggin' an' pleadin' with her to go away with him an' fightin' her refusal to do it. I guess I've got to admit that she didn't love you none, Newbold, an' she did love this here wuthless Armstrong, but for the sake of her reputation I'll prove to you all from them letters of hisn, from his own words, that there didn't live a cleaner hearted, more virtuous, upright feemale than that there wife of yourn, even if she didn't love you. It's God's truth an' you kin take it from me."

"Mr. Armstrong," cried Enid Maitland, interposing at this juncture, "not very long ago I told you I liked you better than any man I had ever seen, I thought perhaps I might have loved you, and that was true. You have played the coward's part and the liar's part in this room —"

"Did I fight him like a coward?" asked Armstrong.

"No," answered Newbold for her, remembering the struggle, "you fought like a man."

Singular perversion of language and thought there! If two struggled like wild beasts that was fighting like men!

"But let that pass," continued the woman. "I don't deny your physical courage, but I am going to appeal to another kind of a courage which I believe you possess. You have showed your evil side here in this room, but I don't believe that's the only side you have, else I couldn't even have liked you in the past. You have made a charge against two women, one dead and one living. It makes little difference what you say about me; I need no defense and no justification in the eyes of those here who love me and for the rest of the world I don't care. But you have slain this man's confidence in a woman he once loved, and whom he thought loved him. As you are a man, tell him that it was a lie and that she was innocent of anything else although she did love you."

What a singular situation, an observer who knew all might have reflected? Here was Enid Maitland pleading for the good name of the woman who had married the man she now loved, and whom by rights she should have jealously hated.

"You ask me more than I can," faltered Arm-

strong, yet greatly moved by this touching appeal to his better self.

"Let him speak no word," protested Newbold quickly. "I wouldn't believe him on his oath."

"Steady now, steady," interposed Kirkby with his frontier instinct for fair play. "The man's down, Newbold, don't hit him now."

"Give him a chance," added Maitland earnestly.

"You would not believe me, eh?" laughed Armstrong horribly; "well then this is what I say, whether it is true or a lie you can be the judge."

What was he about to say? They all recognized instinctively that his forthcoming deliverance would be a final one. Would good or evil dominate him now? Enid Maitland had made her plea and it had been a powerful one; the man did truly love the woman who urged him, there was nothing left for him but a chance that she should think a little better of him than he merited, he had come to the end of his resources. And Enid Maitland spoke again as he hesitated.

"Oh, think, think before you speak," she cried.

"If I thought," answered Armstrong quickly, "I should go mad. Newbold, your wife was as pure as the snow. That she loved me I cannot and will not deny. She married you in a fit of jealousy and anger after a quarrel between us in which I

was to blame, and when I came back to the camp in your absence I strove to make it up and used every argument that I possessed to get her to leave you and to go with me. Although she had no love for you she was too good and too true a woman for that. Now you've got the truth, damn you; believe it or not as you like. Miss Maitland," he added swiftly, "if I had met you sooner, I might have been a better man. Good-by."

He turned suddenly and none preventing, indeed it was not possible, he ran to the outer door; as he did so his hand snatched something that lay on the chest of drawers. There was a flash of light as he drew in his arm but none saw what it was. In a few seconds he was outside the door. The table was between old Kirkby and the exit, Maitland and Newbold were nearest. The old man came to his senses first.

"After him," he cried, "he means —"

But before anybody could stir, the dull report of a pistol came through the open door!

They found Armstrong lying on his back in the snowy path, his face as white as the drift that pillowed his head, Newbold's heavy revolver still clutched in his right hand and a bloody, welling smudge on his left breast over his heart. It was the woman who broke the silence.

"Oh," she sobbed, "it can't be —"

"Dead," said Maitland solemnly.

"And it might have been by my hand," muttered Newbold to himself in horror.

"He'll never cause no more trouble to nobody in this world, Miss Enid an' gents," said old Kirkby gravely. "Well, he was a damned fool an' a damned villain in some ways," continued the old frontiersman reflectively in the silence broken otherwise only by the woman's sobbing breaths, "but he had some of the qualities that go to make a man, an' I ain't doubtin' but what them last words of hisn was mighty near true. Ef he had met a gal like you earlier in his life he mought have been a different man."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE DRAUGHT OF JOY

THE great library was the prettiest room in Robert Maitland's magnificent mansion in Denver's most favored residence section. It was a long, low studded room with a heavy beamed ceiling. The low book cases, about five feet high, ran between all the windows and doors on all sides of the room. At one end there was a huge open fireplace built of rough stone, and as it was winter a cheerful fire of logs blazed on the hearth. It was a man's room preëminently. The drawing room across the hall was Mrs. Maitland's domain, but the library reflected her husband's picturesque if somewhat erratic taste. On the walls there were pictures of the west by Remington, Marchand, Dunton, Dixon and others, and to set them off finely mounted heads of bear and deer and buffalo. Swords and other arms stood here and there. The writing table was massive and the chairs easy, comfortable and inviting. The floor was strewn with robes and rugs. From the windows facing westward, since the house was

set on a high hill, one could see the great rampart of the range.

There were three men in the room on that brilliant morning early in January something like a month after these adventures in the mountains which have been so veraciously set forth. Two of them were the brothers Maitland, the third was Newbold.

The shock produced upon Enid Maitland by the death of Armstrong, together with the tremendous episodes that had preceded it, had utterly prostrated her. They had spent the night at the hut in the mountains and had decided that the woman must be taken back to the settlements in some way at all hazards.

The wit of old Kirkby had effected a solution of the problem. Using a means certainly as old as Napoleon and the passage of his cannon over the Great St. Bernard — and perhaps as old as Hannibal! — they had made a rude sled from the trunk of a pine which they hollowed out and provided with a back and runners. There was no lack of fur robes and blankets for her comfort.

Wherever it was practicable the three men hitched themselves to the sled with ropes and dragged it and Enid over the snow. Of course for miles down the cañon it was impossible to use the sled. When the way was comparatively easy

the woman supported by the two men, Newbold and Maitland, made shift to get along afoot. When it became too difficult for her, Newbold picked her up as he had done before and assisted by Maitland carried her bodily to the next resting place. At these times Kirkby looked after the sled.

They had managed to reach the temporary hut in the old camp the first night and rested there. They gathered up their sleeping bags and tents and resumed their journey in the morning. They were strong men, and, save for old Kirkby, young. It was a desperate endeavor but they carried it through.

When they hit the open trails the sledding was easy and they made great progress. After a week of terrific going they struck the railroad and the next day found them all safe in Maitland's house in Denver.

To Mr. Stephen Maitland his daughter was as one who had risen from the dead. And indeed when he first saw her she looked like death itself. No one had known how terrible that journey had been to the woman. Her three faithful attendants had surmised something, but in spite of all even they did not realize that in these last days she had been sustained only by the most violent effort of her will. She had no sooner reached the

house, greeted her father, her aunt and the children than she collapsed utterly.

The wonder was, said the physician, not that she did it then but that she had not done it before. For a short time it appeared as if her illness might be serious, but youth, vigor, a strong body and a good constitution, a heart now free from care and apprehension and a great desire to live and love and be loved, worked wonders.

Newbold had enjoyed no opportunity for private conversation with the woman he loved, which was perhaps just as well. He had the task of readjusting himself to changed conditions; not only to a different environment, but to strange and unusual departures from his long cherished view points.

He could no longer doubt Armstrong's final testimony to the purity of his wife, although he had burned the letters unread, and by the same token he could no longer cherish the dream that she had loved him and him alone. Those words that had preceded that pistol shot had made it possible for him to take Enid Maitland as his wife without doing violence to his sense of honor or his self-respect. Armstrong had made that much reparation. And Newbold could not doubt that the other had known what would be the result of his speech and had chosen his words deliberately.

Score that last action to his credit. He was a sensitive man, however; he realized the brutal and beastlike part he and Armstrong had both played before this woman they both loved, how they had battled like savage animals and how but for a lucky interposition he would have added murder to his other disabilities.

He was honest enough to say to himself that he would have done the same thing over under the same circumstances, but that did not absolve his conscience. He did not know how the woman looked at the transaction or looked at him, for he had not enjoyed one moment alone with her to enable him to find out.

They had buried Armstrong in the snow, Robert Maitland saying over him a brief but fervent petition in which even Newbold joined. Enid Maitland herself had repeated eloquently to her Uncle and old Kirkby that night before the fire the story of her rescue from the flood by this man, how he had carried her in the storm to the hut and how he had treated her since, and Maitland had afterwards repeated her account to his brother in Denver.

Maitland had insisted that Newbold share his hospitality, but that young man had refused. Kirkby had a little place not far from Denver and easily accessible to it and the old man had

gladly taken the younger one with him. Newbold had been in a fever of anxiety over Enid Maitland's illness, but his alarm had soon been dispelled by the physician's assurance and there was nothing now left for him but to wait until she could see him. He inquired for her morning and evening at the great house on the hill, he kept her room a bower of beauty with priceless blossoms, but he had sent no word.

Robert Maitland had promised to let him know, however, so soon as Enid could see him and it was in pursuance of a telephone message that he was in the library that morning.

He had not yet become accustomed to the world, he had lived so long alone that he had grown somewhat shy and retiring, the habits and customs of years were not to be lightly thrown aside in a week or a month. He had sought no interview with Enid's father heretofore, indeed had rather avoided it, but on this morning he had asked for it, and when Robert Maitland would have withdrawn he begged him to remain.

"Mr. Maitland," Newbold began, "I presume that you know my unfortunate history."

"I have heard the general outlines of it, sir, from my brother and others," answered the other kindly.

"I need not dwell upon it further then. Al-

though my hair is tinged with gray and doubtless I look much older, I was only twenty-eight on my last birthday. I was not born in this section of the country, my home was in Baltimore."

"Do you by any chance belong to the Maryland Newbolds, sir?"

"Yes, sir."

"They are distantly related to a most excellent family of the same name in Philadelphia, I believe?"

"I have always understood that to be the truth."

"Ah, a very satisfactory connection indeed," said Stephen Maitland with no little satisfaction. "Proceed, sir."

"There is nothing much else to say about myself, except that I love your daughter and with your permission I want her for my wife."

Mr. Stephen Maitland had thought long and seriously over the state of affairs. He had proposed in his desperation to give Enid's hand to Armstrong if he found her. It had been impossible to keep secret the story of her adventure, her rescue and the death of Armstrong. It was natural and inevitable that gossip should have busied itself with her name. It would therefore have been somewhat difficult for Mr. Maitland to have withheld his consent to her marriage to

almost any reputable man who had been thrown so intimately with her, but when the man was so unexceptionably born and bred as Newbold, what had appeared as a more or less disagreeable duty, almost an imperative imposition, became a pleasure!

Mr. Maitland was no bad judge of men when his prejudices were not rampant and he looked with much satisfaction on the fine, clean limbed, clear eyed, vigorous man who was at present suing for his daughter's hand. Newbold had shaved his beard and had cropped close his mustache, he was dressed in the habits of civilization and he was almost metamorphosed. His shyness wore away as he talked and his inherited ease of manner and his birthright of good breeding came back to him and sat easily upon him.

Under the circumstances the very best thing that could happen would be a marriage between the two; indeed, to be quite honest, Mr. Stephen Maitland would have felt that perhaps under any circumstances his daughter could do no better than commit herself to a man like this.

"I shall never attempt," he said at last, "to constrain my daughter. I think I have learned something by my touch with this life here, perhaps we of Philadelphia need a little broadening in airs more free. I am sure that she would never

give her hand without her heart, and therefore, she must decide this matter herself. From her own lips you shall have your answer."

"But you, sir; I confess that I should feel easier and happier if I had your sanction and approval."

"Steve," said Mr. Robert Maitland, as the other hesitated, not because he intended to refuse but because he was loath to say the word that so far as he was concerned would give his daughter into another man's keeping, "I think you can trust Newbold. There are men here who knew him years ago; there is abundant evidence and testimony as to his qualities; I vouch for him."

"Robert," answered his brother, "I need no such testimony; the way in which he saved Enid, the way he comported himself during that period of isolation with her, his present bearing — in short, sir, if a father is ever glad to give away his daughter, I might say that I should be glad to entrust her to you. I believe you to be a man of honor and a gentleman, your family is almost as old as my own, as for the disparity in our fortunes, I can easily remedy that."

Newbold smiled at Enid's father, but it was a pleasant smile, albeit with a trace of mockery and a trace of triumph in it.

"Mr. Maitland I am more grateful to you than I can say for your consent and approval

which I shall do my best to merit. I think I may claim to have won your daughter's heart, to have added to that your sanction completes my happiness. As for the disparity in our fortunes, while your generosity touches me profoundly, I hardly think that you need be under any uneasiness as to our material welfare."

"What do you mean?"

"I am a mining engineer, sir; I didn't live five years alone in the mountains of Colorado for nothing."

"Pray explain yourself, sir."

"Did you find gold in the hills?" asked Robert Maitland, quicker to understand.

"The richest veins on the continent," answered Newbold.

"And nobody knows anything about it?"

"Not a soul."

"Have you located the claims?"

"Only one."

"We'll go back as soon as the snow melts," said the younger Maitland, "and take them up. You are sure?"

"Absolutely."

"But I don't quite understand?" queried Mr. Stephen Maitland.

"He means," said his brother, "that he has discovered gold."

"And silver too," interposed Newbold.

"In unlimited quantities," continued the other Maitland.

"Your daughter will have more money than she knows what to do with, sir," smiled Newbold.

"God bless me!" exclaimed the Philadelphian.

"And that, whether she marries me or not, for the richest claim of all is to be taken out in her name," added her lover.

Mr. Stephen Maitland shook the other by the hand vigorously.

"I congratulate you," he said, "you have beaten me on all points. I must therefore regard you as the most eligible of suitors. Gold in these mountains, well, well!"

"And may I see your daughter and plead my cause in person, sir?" asked Newbold.

"Certainly, certainly. Robert, will you oblige me—"

In compliance with his brother's gesture, Robert Maitland touched the bell and bade the answering servant ask Miss Maitland to come down to the library.

"Now," said Mr. Stephen Maitland as the servant closed the door, "you and I would best leave the young people alone, eh, Robert?"

"By all means," answered the younger and opening the door again the two older men went out leaving Newbold alone.

He heard a soft step on the stair in the hall without, the gentle swish of a dress as somebody descended from the floor above. A vision appeared in the doorway. Without a movement in opposition, without a word of remonstrance, without a throb of hesitation on her part, he took her in his arms. From the drawing room opposite, Mr. Robert Maitland softly tiptoed across the hall and closed the library door, neither of the lovers being aware of his action.

Often and often they had longed for each other on the opposite side of a door and now at last the woman was in the man's arms and no door rose between them, no barrier kept them apart any longer. There was no obligation of loyalty or honor, real or imagined, to separate them now. They had drunk deep of the chalice of courage, they had drained the cup to the very bottom, they had shown each other that though love was the greatest of passions, honor and loyalty were the most powerful of forces and now they reaped the reward of their abnegation and devotion.

At last the woman gave herself up to him in complete and entire abandonment without fear and without reproach; and at last the man took what was his own without the shadow of a reservation. She shrank from no pressure of his arms, she turned her face away from no touch of his lips.

They two had proved their right to surrender by their ability to conquer.

Speech was hardly necessary between them and it was not for a long time that coherent words came. Little murmurs of endearment, little passionate whispers of a beloved name — these were enough then.

When he could find strength to deny himself a little and to hold her at arm's length and look at her, he found her paler, thinner and more delicate than when he had seen her in the mountains. She had on some witching creation of pale blue and silver, he didn't know what it was, he didn't care, it made her only more like an angel to him than ever. She found him, too, greatly changed and highly approved the alterations in his appearance.

"Why, Will," she said at last, "I never realized what a handsome man you were."

He laughed at her.

"I always knew you were the most beautiful woman on earth."

"Oh, yes, doubtless when I was the only one."

"And if there were millions you would still be the only one. But it isn't for your beauty alone that I love you. You knew all the time that my fight against loving you was based upon a misinterpretation, a mistake; you didn't tell me because

you were thoughtful of a poor dead woman."

"Should I have told you?"

"No. I have thought it all out: I was loyal through a mistake but you wouldn't betray a dead sister, you would save her reputation in the mind of the one being that remembered her, at the expense of your own happiness. And if there were nothing else I could love you for that."

"And is there anything else?" asked she who would fain be loved for other qualities.

"Everything," he answered rapturously, drawing her once more to his heart.

"I knew that there would be some way," answered the satisfied woman softly after a little space. "Love like ours is not born to fall short of the completest happiness. Oh, how fortunate for me was that idle impulse that turned me up the cañon instead of down, for if it had not been for that there would have been no meeting—"

She stopped suddenly, her face aflame at the thought of the conditions of that meeting, she must needs hide her face on his shoulder.

He laughed gayly.

"My little spirit of the fountain, my love, my wife that is to be! Did you know that your father has done me the honor to give me your hand, subject to the condition that your heart goes with it?"

"You took that first," answered the woman looking up at him again.

There was a knock on the door. Without waiting for permission it was opened; this time three men entered, for old Kirkby had joined the group. The blushing Enid made an impulsive movement to tear herself away from Newbold's arms, but he shamelessly held her close. The three men looked at the two lovers solemnly for a moment and then broke into laughter. It was Kirkby who spoke first.

"I hear as how you found gold in them mountains, Mr. Newbold."

"I found something far more valuable than all the gold in Colorado in these mountains," answered the other.

"And what was that?" asked the old frontiersman curiously and innocently.

"This!" answered Newbold as he kissed the girl again.

THE END

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